First-Year Seminars constitute the gateway to the K-Plan and to college life for entering students, while also serving as the foundation of the Shared Passages Program. Offered in fall quarter, First-Year Seminars are designed to orient students to college-level learning, with particular emphasis on critical thinking, writing, and speaking. In keeping with Kalamazoo College's emphasis on intercultural education, they aim to engage students in the study of significant social and historical differences. They integrate collaborative and group work, effective research strategies and discussions, all promoting active, engaged learning. They work to accustom students to modes of academic behavior likely to promote success in college, including class participation, productive approaches to assignments, visits to faculty members' offices, and awareness of support structures for K students.

First-Year Seminars are linked to academic advising, the First-Year Experience program, Upjohn Library, and the Writing Center. They create connections with the components of the K-Plan: depth and breadth in the liberal arts; learning through experience; international and intercultural engagement; and independent scholarship.

2015 DESCRIPTIONS

Note: First-Year Seminar descriptions are also available on the online course schedule. Students will choose and register for a First-Year Seminar during their registration time. Detailed information on how to search and register for courses can be found on the Hornet Hive.

ENCODED: ROCK AND ROLL TO RAP - ZAIDE PIXLEY (SEMN-131)
What do rock and roll and rap “mean”—culturally, musically, and personally? How has popular music reflected and shaped American life? What role does race play? Why do the blues of Robert Johnson cast such a long shadow? Why was Elvis considered safer than Big Mama Thornton? What does Marvin Gaye say about “What’s goin’ on”? What gender issues do Little Richard, the Supremes, Tina Turner, and Bikini Kill raise? What’s the message of punk—and funk? Is heavy metal dangerous? How have Jay-Z and other rappers found their voices—and helped us find ours? We will consider how music comforts, angers, and delights us, and how it expresses our deepest thoughts and feelings. This course is for people who love music and are fascinated by how it works in contemporary American culture.

DRAMA USA: AGAINST THE CURRENT- ED MENTA (SEMN-133)
This course uses works by American playwrights to study issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and social class in American society, with particular attention to dramatic authors who have sometimes struggled “against the current” to make their voices heard in the mainstream values of the dominant culture. We will read works from among Diane Glancy, David Henry Hwang, Moisés Kaufman, Cherrie Moraga, Marsha Norman, Clifford Odets, Luis Valdez, and August Wilson. Along the way we will discuss such trends in the American Theatre as realism and political theatre, including feminist theatre, African-American theatre, Hispanic theatre, Asian-American theatre, Native American theatre, and gay/lesbian theatre.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY - AMELIA KATANSKI (SEMN-135)
Novelist and environmentalist Wendell Berry has written, “A significant part of the pleasure of eating is in one’s accurate consciousness of the lives and the world from which food comes. . . . Eating with the
fullest pleasure—pleasure, that is, that does not depend on ignorance—is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world.” And yet, in today’s world of fast, processed food, many of us have lost of our connection to where our food comes from. Is it possible to rebuild relationships between those who grow and harvest food and those who eat it and gain an accurate consciousness of the connection between plate and planet, cuisine and culture? In this seminar, we will learn about the industrial food system and explore the ways that people today are developing alternatives that use food as an instrument of social justice and a way to build strong communities. We’ll read Michael Pollan’s influential exposé *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* as our starting point in our exploration of food justice, but we will study this issue from a variety of perspectives. We will talk with local farmers, community organizers, farm workers’ advocates, entrepreneurs, and anti-hunger activists and get to know the Kalamazoo community by experiencing its harvest. We will also engage in a service-learning project that will work to provide information about and access to just, local, and sustainable food for everyone in our community. *Academic service-learning combines classroom study with real world experience, allowing students to apply what they are learning to everyday life in a way that addresses community-identified needs.*

**CROSSING BORDERS: AUTISM AND OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING - BRUCE MILLS (SEMN-136)**

For the past ten years, the diagnosis of and attention to autism has grown exponentially. More public awareness and debate, however, does not guarantee a more complex understanding. In this class, we will explore autobiographies, essays, clinical studies, and films about or by those with autism or Asperger’s in order to gain an informed understanding of this widely-diagnosed spectrum disorder. We will move outside the borders of the class to see students within AI (autistic-impaired) classrooms and participate in service-learning work in the Kalamazoo community. For this work, groups of students will be matched and spend time with a person on the spectrum and his or her family. In an effort to understand this way of knowing, we will consider how expectations about communication and social relationships “impair” and/or enhance an ability to live in a “neurodiverse” world. If you have a reason for wishing to take this seminar (i.e., if you have a sibling with autism, worked with or befriended someone on the spectrum, etc.), please contact Bruce Mills at bmills@kzoo.edu as soon as possible. Though it will not guarantee a place in the class, this contact will enable us to consider specific interests or circumstances more closely. *Academic service-learning combines classroom study with real world experience, allowing students to apply what they are learning to everyday life in a way that addresses community-identified needs.*

**CO-AUTHORING YOUR LIFE: WRITING YOUR SELF IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHERS - ANDY MOZINA (SEMN-137)**

The autonomous, self-made individual is a powerful American myth. But no person is entirely self-made; all of us are embedded in various families and communities and ideologies, and we also find ourselves marked by cultural conditions such as our race, class, religion, gender and sexual orientation, all of which influence who we are in various ways. The clash between the desire for autonomy and the shaping power of these social conditions makes the process of coming up with an identity extremely difficult and complex. How can we maintain a sense of autonomy while acknowledging influences? How can we be ourselves while learning from others? How do we write our own lives when so many other hands seem to hold, or to want to hold, the pen with us? Through novels, stories, autobiographies, essays and films, this course will explore different situations in which people struggle to form identities under intense “co-authoring” pressures. You will write analytical essays about the texts of others and personal essays about yourself.
OUR SHAKESPEARES, OURSELVES - AMY SMITH (SEMN-139)
Cultures often retell stories from the past as a way of thinking through the present: perhaps because using already existing material makes it easier to explore difficult issues, perhaps because we feel the need to “talk back” to the writers who have so deeply inflected our culture. In this course, we’ll be focusing on how modern cultures have reworked Shakespeare’s plays into a 1950’s sci-fi film, an MTV inspired movie, Afro-Caribbean drama, rock and rap music, and a Julia Stiles movie set in the Deep South. In exploring how Shakespeare has been adapted to these radically different contexts, we’ll also be exploring the difficult issues these adaptations focus on--race, gender, sexuality, colonialism and class. What a culture does with Shakespeare’s plays can tell you a lot about that culture; so we’ll be asking a number of questions: Why is Shakespeare so popular in the United States today? What does he mean to us? What are we doing with his plays and why? What do our adaptations of his work tell us about our own views about racism or sexism in America, for example?

IT’S A FREE COUNTRY - JENNIFER EINSPAHR (SEMN-144)
In the U.S., freedom is perhaps our oldest and most consistently claimed political value. We have long prided ourselves on being “the land of the free.” Yet when it comes to defining exactly what we mean by freedom, to whom and over what areas of life it pertains, and how it is best weighed against other values such as security and equality, there is widespread disagreement. In this course we will address questions surrounding the concept of freedom in the U.S. through a contextualized examination of political thought. We will begin with contestations over the meaning of freedom in Revolutionary America and move toward debates surrounding what we mean by freedom in the U.S. today.

THE BEST OF INTENTIONS – JAN SOLBERG (SEMN-149)
It has been said that culture is to people what water is to fish; that is, it’s an invisible medium through which we glide without even being aware of it — until we take a dip in someone else’s pond, or someone hops into ours! Or, worse, when one finds oneself metaphorically gasping for breath as does “a fish out of water.” In this course, we’ll arrive at a working definition of culture, and see how cultural and psychological mindsets can keep us from really seeing people who are not like us. Looking at encounters among Europeans, Africans, Asians, and those from the Middle East, we’ll see how even good intentions can cause cultural train wrecks, and how misperceptions can lead humans to treat one another in inhumane ways. Venues for study will include academic texts, essays, literature and films.

ROOTS IN THE EARTH - AMY NEWDAY (SEMN-152)
Even in the most developed and densely populated of cities, we are connected to nature. As essayist John Burroughs wrote, “We are rooted to the air through our lungs and to the soil through our stomachs.” In this seminar we’ll examine our relationship with the natural world. What belief systems have influenced human interactions with nature throughout history and across cultures? Is our current relationship to the non-human world serving us as individuals and as members of a global community or can we envision new ways of relating that might be both more sustainable and more satisfying? Through readings beginning with Bill McKibben’s American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau, films, discussions, writings, and explorations of our local environment, we’ll grapple with these questions and current environmental issues such as climate change, local vs. industrial food production systems, and the value of preserving wilderness in a time of dwindling natural resources.

WHO ARE THE SAMURAI? - DENNIS FROST (SEMN-154)
On a dark, chilly night in the city of Edo, Japan in 1703, 46 men broke into the home of a government official and murdered him. The story of these men, best known as the 47 rōnin (and yes, you read the number correctly), has been retold countless times since that night. Outlaws to some and heroes to many,
the 47 rōnin have often been lauded as exemplars of true samurai. But what exactly is a “true samurai”? When you think of the samurai, what do you imagine? Is the image you have in mind the product of fact or fiction, or perhaps a little of both? Did you know, for instance, that the samurai included both women and children? Since most people are not familiar with the history of Japan’s famous warriors, in this seminar we will begin by drawing from a variety of sources to explore how this warrior class—men, women, and children—lived, and how they have been viewed both within and outside Japan. We will combine our historical examinations of the emergence, evolution, demise, and reinvention of the samurai with analyses of representations of “samurai” in literature, film, sports, and business in order to gain a better sense of who the samurai are, how they have been portrayed, and why the samurai—and especially the 47 rōnin—have become such an enduring and popular symbol of Japan.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER - GARY GREGG (SEMN-155)
In 1991 President George Bush (Sr.) announced the emergence of a “New World Order.” “Communism” had collapsed and almost overnight the world became a single capitalist system. Globalization then accelerated, with light-speed communication through the internet, intensified flows of goods around the planet, and the outsourcing of work to low-wage countries—accompanied by rapidly increasing inequality and concentration of wealth, and the swelling of slums in megacities. The seminar will study recent analyses of the New World Order in the context of theories of “modernization” and “globalization.” Then we will examine the culture of the investment bankers who are its main architects and the ideology of “neoliberalism” that is their blueprint, and read studies of an American city that jobs left, a Mexican city where jobs arrived, and a slum in Mumbai. Students will write brief review-style essays, a theoretical analysis of “globalization,” and a case study of the region in which they are likely to study abroad.

VISIONS OF THE END - JASON YOST (SEMN-160)
Plague and hellfire; crumbling cities and avenging angels; a heavenly kingdom, golden and eternal—these apocalyptic images are among the most stirring moments in the Bible. They have inspired countless works of art with their devastating portrayal of the world’s end. They have also maintained a constant, pervasive influence on theology, philosophy, political theory, and popular culture. In this seminar, we will carefully read the biblical apocalypses and consider how these foundational texts have been interpreted by Jewish and Christian theologians over the years. We will then explore a range of literary works such as Spenser’s Faerie Queene and the Poetic Edda which deliberately mimic the style of the biblical apocalypse. And finally we will turn to some contemporary “post-apocalyptic” works such as Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner and Cormac McCarthy’s The Road in order to reflect on how current events and anxieties have radically transformed our modern visions of the end.

SALEM POSSESSED: THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS AND THEIR LEGACIES - CHARLENE BOYER LEWIS (SEMN-168)
In 1692, the people of Salem, Massachusetts grew terrified when a small group of girls accused an enslaved woman, an impoverished woman, and a scandalous woman of bewitching them. Ultimately, twenty men and women were hung or pressed to death with stones and over a hundred others found themselves imprisoned. Historians have long considered the Salem Witch Trials a pivotal moment in American history. Countless works have offered countless reasons for the strange happenings in Salem, trying to explain why a small community in Colonial America would succumb to witchcraft hysteria long after it had died down in Europe. The Salem Witch Trials have haunted American culture. Starting in the nineteenth century and continuing into the present, writers and artists have grappled with the various meanings of the witch hunts and the persecution of innocent persons, seeing connections between “the furies of fanaticism and paranoia” of 1692 and their own time. Most famously, Arthur
Miller in *The Crucible* used the trials to examine the persecution of alleged Communists in the 1950s. This course will examine and seek to understand the events of 1692 and the subsequent legacies of the trials in American culture through the actual documents from the trials, the writings of historians, and the imaginative works of novelists, playwrights, poets, and film makers.

**CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND RELIGION - SHREENA GANDHI (SEMN-169)**

In 1849, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?"

In this class we will look at how these words have impacted various religious leaders in the 20th century. We will be reading selections from Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Cesar Chavez and Oscar Romero, and watching movies and documentaries based on their lives. Using primary documents, media and secondary sources, we will examine their social, religious, political and economic worlds, the changes they inspired, their failures, and their local/global impact. A significant task of this class will entail keeping up with current events and tracking how people locally, nationally and globally are resisting capitalism, protesting various inequities and struggling for justice (as you start your career at Kalamazoo College). What can we learn about how social justice works and happens? What are the reasons for resistance against capitalism, the state or an empire? Is it better to work for small changes over time or go for whole-sale revolution? Is peaceful protest and non-violence the best method for achieving justice?

**SOCIAL BEE-INGS - ANN FRASER (SEMN-171)**

Honeybees and humans are supremely social. But what does it mean to be social? Why are some species social while others are solitary? Do social group members work for the common good or to fulfill selfish interests? Perhaps they can do both, but what happens when these goals conflict – how is social order maintained? We will explore the origins and maintenance of social living across the animal kingdom and ask to what extent human societies represent larger scale models of other animal societies -- insects and non-human primates in particular -- and to what extent humans are unique. We will explore the political, economic, biological, cultural, sociological and philosophical elements of social life through a variety of media and genres. In doing so, we will inevitably explore the human condition.

**LIFE WITH TWO LANGUAGES - LARISSA DUGAS (SEMN-172)**

Almost half of the world’s population uses two or more languages as they go about their daily lives. In this seminar, we will explore what it means to be a bilingual or multilingual person – how this affects our brains, our ways of communicating, and our perspective on the world. We will also investigate how different societies organize life with two or more languages. Finally, we will reflect on attitudes of bilingual and monolingual speakers towards bilingualism. Yookoso -Bienvenido- Bienvenue-  Hwan-yung-hahm-ni-da - Chào mừng. *This course is designed for students from a multilingual household or community or those whose primary residence is outside of the United States.*

**MIGRATION, COMMUNITY, AND SELF - JEFFREY HAUS (SEMN-173)**

Going to college and immigrating to a new country have much in common. Moving to a new place presents many challenges. The immigrant (or first-year student) can experience loneliness and displacement, a yearning for home, and bewilderment at his/her new surroundings. Yet, a new environment also offers opportunities for personal growth that force immigrants to reconcile “Old” with “New.” Through reading, writing, and discussion, students will seek to relate their own “migration” to Kalamazoo College to the experiences of European Jews moving to the United States. Along the way, the class will explore many of the universal questions raised by relocation. What motivates people to pick up their lives and move to a new place, and what happens to them when they arrive? How does the
migration experience shape their view of the world they left behind and their view of their new environment? How do immigrants construct communities for themselves? Do women and men experience migration in similar or different ways? Finally, how does moving to a new place shape one’s sense of self? We will explore these questions using historical and cultural sources, fiction, and film.

CHANGING OUR MINDS - PAUL SOTHERLAND (SEMN-177)

What do miasma, hysteria, slavery, and eugenics have in common? And, what caused people to view these phenomena, and others we will encounter, in a new light? Together we will explore what causes humans, individually and collectively, to change their notions about how the world works and then use their new mindsets to shape how they perceive their world. Through our exploration – by reading, watching, discussing, and writing about works including How We Learn, The Ghost Map, “Hysteria,” Blink, “Amazing Grace,” Bury the Chains, and various readings about “improving” humans – we will develop a clearer and deeper understanding of what causes us to change our minds.

THE PARADOX OF HUMAN DESIRE: PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS - CHRIS LATIOLAIS (SEMN-181)

In this course, we examine the way in which Friedrich Nietzsche’s genealogy and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis severely challenge traditional conceptions of the rational self. Traditional “Enlightenment” or rationalist models of subjectivity assume that a person is conscious of feelings and desires, rational in planning and executing actions, and responsible, both to oneself and to others, for explaining and justifying one’s conduct. In short, rationalists uphold the ideal that we can master our own fate. Against this view, Nietzsche and Freud demonstrate the fragmented, unconscious, wild, strange, paradoxical, and often chaotic nature of human desire, action, and self-understanding. Such “dark thinkers of Enlightenment” unmask the ideal of rational agency as a comic pretense or naïve illusion. In this course, we will explore Nietzsche’s and Freud’s views on the paradoxical nature of the human experience of desire, time, and one’s own body. More specifically, we will examine how subsequent figures such as Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have identified four famous paradoxes of human life: the paradoxical fact that we understand something only when it’s over (time); the paradoxical fact that we only come to know our prior intentions through our future deeds (action); and the paradoxical fact that our desires are the source of our worst nightmares (desire); and the paradoxical fact that what is closest and most familiar to us, our body, is often what is most distant, alien, and perplexing (body). Readings from Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Carr, Habermas, Fink, and Lloyd. Movies such as Memento, Angel Heart, Apocalypse Now, Lost Highway, and The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema will be shown.

FUR, FEATHERS, SCALES, AND SKIN: ANIMALS AND SOCIETY – STACY NOWICKI (SEMN-183)

Human-Animal Studies (HAS, also known as “anthrozoology”) is the study of interactions and relationships between human and non-human animals. It asks: what can we humans learn about ourselves from our relationships with non-human animals? What does the way we think about and treat other animals reveal about who we are? In this seminar we will explore our daily interactions with animals and animal products and how these interactions shape societies. We will discover what belief systems we have in the moral and ethical treatment of animals, and whether our current relationship to non-human animals is serving us well as individuals and as members of a global community. Through readings, discussions, and writings, we will explore these questions through issues such as animals as pets, animals as food, animals as entertainment, the human/animal bond, violence against humans and animals, and the value of animals in society.
SLANG: A DISCUSSION OF INFORMAL ENGLISH - CANDACE BAILEY COMBS (SEMN-184)
Slang is the ever-changing use of informal language that is reflective of culture and society. Though slang is most common in spoken language, modern dictionaries have long embraced slang and recorded its usage. Notable examples include the Oxford English Dictionary new entries of ‘vape,’ ‘selfie,’ and ‘GIF.’ In this class, we will discuss, research, and write about the informal use of slang and its role in social interactions as well as what slang represents in the lives of English speakers. We will trace American slang from its separation from British English up until the current age and identify the purpose of slang in a community of speakers. An important distinction will be made regarding the environment of informal and formal language and how English speakers navigate the cultural requirements of spoken and written language in academic settings. Through readings, videos, discussion, and writing, we will explore the fun and function of slang. This course is designed for students whose native language is not English.

BECOMING OURSELVES: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING IDENTITIES - PATRICK AHERN (SEMN-185)
Western philosophy famously set the task of philosophical thought in the dictum to “know thyself.” While this would appear at first blush to be the simplest of all tasks (for what could we possibly know better than ourselves?), it turns out to be a task wrought with challenges as self-reflection often serves as the “blind spot” of our knowledge of ourselves, and the world that we inhabit. To what extent do we define ourselves and to what extent is our identity a product of how others define us? We will look to a variety of readings in the history of philosophy that address the central issues that inform who we are, such as our conceptions of what friendship is (Aristotle/ Cicero), what love is (Plato/ Socrates), how we order and define our values (Nietzsche), and more. Then, we will look to the ways in which our identities are formed socially, turning to theories of class, race, gender, and sexuality that express the multi-faceted ways that our self-definition confronts the society in which we live.

PEACE AND HARMONY - MADELINE CHU (SEMN-186)
The Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Daoism were founded during an era of political strife and social unrest. Thus, the philosophers, such as Confucius, Mencius, Laozi and Zhuangzi, concerned themselves with, more than anything else, peace and harmony of the human world. They have left a cultural legacy for the Chinese people and their philosophies have deeply influenced human history in general. More importantly, they have provided a useful reference for the modern generation in our planning and pursuit for a meaningful life. In this seminar the Confucian and Daoist texts and relevant articles are used as the basic materials to initiate discussions. The topics we will discuss and write about include self-cultivation, human relationship, nature and naturalness, ideas of being and becoming, the power and limitations of human intelligence, the difference between uniformity and harmony, value systems and moral judgments, and social and political issues that concern us. The goals of this seminar are to achieve a better understanding of our own humanity and aspiration, and to more efficiently express our ideas and communicate with others.

DREAD GODDESSES, HEROES, AND THE ANCIENT COSMOS - MATT NEWMAN (SEMN-187)
On the surface, much ancient myth seems to strip female characters of agency and enslave their narratives (as much as their bodies) to those of male heroes and gods. But a second glance reveals powerful females “rewriting” the male cosmos in dramatic ways: the Sumerian goddess Inanna steals all of the powers of heaven; Pandora and Eve propagate the Fall of man; Helen uses magical painkillers to facilitate storytelling in Homer’s Odyssey; Clytaemestra “outmans” all of the men in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon and orchestrates exceptional bloodshed; Earth herself arranges for violent dynastic succession; more recently, in George Miller’s Mad Max: Fury Road (2015), Imperator Furiosa brings
Immortal Joe’s reign to its knees and potentially “overwrites” Max as the main hero. In terms of literary history, too, the Lesbian poet Sappho (re)shaped the canon and became complicit in the gender instability of later male poetic voices. So what is the connection of gender and sexuality to mythic narrative? To mortal identity? To cosmology and the environment? How do gender and class coincide in the ancient literary mind? Gender and sanity? Gender and genre? Alongside selections from ancient texts, students will consider some modern gender theory, watch Mad Max: Fury Road, and assess the gendered critical response to it. Students will examine how gender and sexuality “move” mythic narrative and disrupt its language; more importantly, they will reflect on how the same factors complicate—and enrich—the ways in which they narrate their own lives, even to themselves.