

Integrative Studies Guide

What are Integrative Studies courses?

Otterbein's Integrative Studies (often referred to as INST, for short) program is at the heart of the University's commitment to liberal learning and is the largest component of the general education curriculum. The INST program curriculum, which experts call the model they hope other schools follow, aims to prepare you for the challenges and complexity of a 21st century world. It teaches multiple skills, competencies and ways of knowing through an interdisciplinary approach.

The first requirement of the Integrative Studies program is your First Year Seminar. Included in this packet are the course descriptions for the FYS classes offered next year.

The second Integrative Studies requirement is an INST 1500 course. Foregrounding the study of literature and writing, INST 1500 courses explore the self in dynamic and critical terms. The unifying theme for INST 1500 classes is "Identity Projects." In this class you will be expected to read closely, think critically and further develop your writing skills. INST 1500 fulfills your first Writing Intensive requirement. All Otterbein students are required to complete an Identity Projects course.

Integrative Studies 1500 offerings are organized around three pivotal topics or course umbrellas:

- **INST 1501 Self Discoveries**

These courses explore how *personal* identities are expressed, created, transformed or complicated.

- **INST 1502 Situated Selves**

These courses explore *collective or cultural* identities in a rich range of local and global contexts.

- **INST 1503 Past Lives**

These courses examine *historical* expressions of identity, engaging a rich, fascinating and often alien past.

Each Integrative Studies 1500 course has a distinct sub theme—an animating interest area that drives the class content and assignments. We invite you to review the course descriptions on the next page and identify courses that reflect your own interests, passions and curiosities. When you complete the online registration survey you will be asked to indicate your interest in each course.

(Students who have been invited into the Honors Program are asked to take the Honors (HNRS) sections of INST 1500. The descriptions are included in the list and indicated as an Honors section)

INST Course Descriptions

Fall 2021

NON-HONORS SECTIONS

Home and Beyond | INST 1501-01 and 02

In this course, we will engage in thorough self-reflection by breaking down and reexamining our concept of home. Through our study, we will consider a variety of homes, local and abroad, and the people that inhabit them. The goal is to strengthen our understanding of this concept and its influence on our ability to empathize with people who come from homes different than our own. To this end, we will study literature from a diverse group of authors in several genres – graphic narrative, stage play, film, essay, and novel. We will also generate our own creative and analytical writing in response to these texts as well as the overall course theme. This course will help to develop writing and critical thinking skills.

Closer: Love. Sex. Intimacy | INST 1501-03

This course intends to tackle love, sex, and intimacy as philosophical problems. What does this mean? It means, among other things, that we will think a great deal about the nature of meaningful love and partnership. We will discuss and analyze the kind of romantic love we seek, the sort of relationships we create, and the many reasons we succeed or fail at physical and emotional intimacy. We will talk about the fears and anxieties that are often generated by human closeness, and we will debate how an authentic love relationship might understand and work through them. We will carefully consider the ideals of romantic love that various contemporary cultures seem to promote, and we will examine the many ways that unthinking loyalty to this ideal might prevent us from experiencing something more enriching and meaningful.

More specifically, this course will read—and feel—like an extended exploration into the most stubborn questions of love, sex, and relationship. Is it right to believe that love completes us? Is romantic love a source of oppression for women? Why are sex and love often mistaken for each other? What accounts for the intoxication of infatuation? Why does unrequited love often feel like a tortuous pleasure? Why does mainstream culture see sex as compulsory? Why should successful lovers maintain a healthy amount of solitude? Why do so many find fulfillment and liberation in adultery? And what qualifies as a happy marriage (or monogamy) anyway?

The Comic Perspective | INST 1501-04

“Against the assault of Laughter, nothing can stand.” --Mark Twain.

The comic perspective has been essential to our understanding of life from Lysistrata to the Lucy Show, from Shakespeare's comedies of misunderstanding to the chaos of the Marx Brothers, from Voltaire, to Mark Twain, to modern 'mockumentaries.' Comedy provides us with a means of commenting on and correcting the vision of society. Whether it's scathing political satire, or simply the recognition (and ridicule) of human foolishness and vanity in its myriad forms, comic literature seeks the truth. It involves no less reflection on the human condition than tragedy, or works of more serious philosophical bent, but its catharsis is achieved through humor. While in some sense tragedy involves coming to terms with one's fate, comedy

embodies active resistance—refusing to accept the social/political norms. Comedy is rebellion. Satire is challenging, subversive, and slippery. An ancient, yet eminently adaptable form, it shapes itself to the times, and requires a certain level of sophistication (intelligence) from its audience. As Horace Walpole said: “Life is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel.”

Critical Collisions, Decisive Decisions | INST 1502-01, 02, and 03

This course will examine the collision between human beings and the larger world and value systems in which they live. Our reading of literary texts that stage this collision will frequently confront us with decision points—points that force us to ask: what is to be done? In pursuit of answers to this question, we shall engage critically with how dominant values determine (and circumscribe) who we are and the kinds of actions even available to us. We shall also, however, consider rebels, outcasts, nonconformists, and other forms of protest that decide on or seek new ways of living in the world. Texts for the course will likely include some or most of the following: Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Yaa Gyasi's *Homecoming*, Sam Quinones' *Dreamland*, Brian Alexander's *Glass House*, Hiroko Oyamada's *The Factory*, and Jessica Bruder's *Nomadland*.

Family, More Than Kin | INST 1502-04 and 05

From King Lear to the Kardashians, we've been intrigued by stories of families. Writers celebrate their support, honor their achievements, deny their faults, and expose their frailties. Whether struggling to become independent from families of origin or thinking of starting families of our own, we understand the importance of family in our identities. In this course, we will read about the history of family, and we'll examine recent changes in families, locally and globally; we'll reflect on the topic of family both emotionally and intellectually. In our study of families, we'll identify problems families face and describe resources available to them, and we will produce a variety of texts in different media, ranging from traditional prose narratives and analyses to digital essays and other forms of image and sound.

National and Racial Identity in the Modern Era | INST 1503-01 and 02

In 2008, the United States elected its first Black president. This event is a historical milestone, but its meaning is debatable. Does it mean that racial difference has been replaced as a form of “otherness” by cultural or religious difference? Does it signal the advent of a “post-racial” society in the near future? Why do a substantial portion of Americans continue to believe that Obama is Muslim, or that he is not an American citizen? What does it mean that Trump began his political career by publicly embracing and amplifying the “birther” movement (a conspiracy theory that Obama was not born in the United States)? It is difficult make sense of these events, and much else that is happening in our world, without understanding the intertwined histories of race and modern nationalism.

We will begin by reading reflections on race by contemporary scholars from the fields of anthropology, history, and philosophy. We will then embark on the study of race and nationalism from the Renaissance into the twentieth century through the media of novels, essays, poems, short stories, and drama. Major texts will include Shakespeare's *Othello*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, poems by Coleridge, Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. This course will emphasize expository, analytic, reflective, and persuasive writing.

HONORS SECTIONS (*Open to Honors Program Students Only*)

Educated: The Story of School | HNRS 1500—HN1

In *Educated*, her electrifying memoir of growing up in a Mormon survivalist family in Idaho, Tara Westover remarks: “Everything I had worked for, all my years of study, had been to purchase for myself this one privilege: to see and experience more truths than those given to me by my father, and to use those truths to construct my own mind.” As you begin your own ‘higher education’ (aka college), this course will ask you to reflect on the education you’ve received so far—on the influences of your community and family as well as your own decisions.

Together we’ll think about the freedom college promises to construct an education and create a new self, as well as the ambivalence of leaving home and past behind. We’ll trace the histories of both high school and college education systems in the US, and we’ll explore the persistent (in many cases increasing) inequality and racial segregation in American schools. We’ll talk about what educational liberation might look like, in the age of COVID and beyond. Because this is a literature class, we’ll primarily explore these dilemmas in fiction, poetry, and memoir across different historical eras.

Our Monsters, Ourselves | HNRS 1500—HN2

Since the time of the earliest cave drawings, monsters—in one form or another—have been central to the human psyche and prevalent throughout cultural history. Wild things, aliens, ogres, and demons have dominated the human imagination, appearing in literature, art, cinema, theme parks, and even on cereal boxes (Count Chocula and Frankenberry). While we dread and fear them, we also seem perversely fascinated by them and their darker tendencies (unchecked aggression, strong sexuality, cannibalism, superhuman strength, total disregard for laws and conventions). While we may want to place them apart from ourselves as alien or non-human, all too often they represent our deepest fears and most conflicted selves, especially our fears of the unknown, the forbidden, and the different.

Through literature, film, and critical theory, this course will explore a variety of monsters from several historic periods and cultures, including ancient beasties, colonized “others,” vampires, zombies, werewolves, cyborgs, and other post-modern hybrids. It will also identify how monster narratives are constructed, what monsters have in common, and how they benchmark what it means to be human. Students taking this course will sharpen their fundamental writing skills; practice close reading and critical analysis; cultivate oral presentation skills; develop their research skills and access, evaluate, credit, and cite source texts; and participate in a scholarly community. Students will also contribute to “The Monster Archive,” an on-going student research project reflecting their own interests in monsters and the monstrous.

The Critical Spirit: Reading Empathy | HNRS 1500—HN3

We often hear that reading will “make you a better person,” that the experience of reading makes us empathic. Reading a novel, for instance—as it gives us insight into perspectives, experiences, and feelings that are new or unfamiliar—is said to help us understand a position or problem from another point of view.

In this course, we will consider the relation between reading and empathy. Through fiction, films, and critical essays, we will consider the politics of reading and empathy. How does literature represent or promote empathy? Are all readers equally empathic, particularly in a global context? How can we relate to the pain of others? What factors (race, class, gender) impinge upon the possibility—or even desirability—of reading with empathy? Is there a viable

relationship between reading, empathy, and political engagement? What happens when empathy is exploited? Does literature really help us understand what others are thinking or feeling? Topics will include the politics of empathy, protest novels, sentimental fiction, and false empathy. Texts will include novels by Toni Morrison, Albert Camus, Mohsin Hamid, Jamaica Kincaid, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Herman Melville; essays by Joan Didion, James Baldwin, Leslie Jamison, and Susan Sontag; and films such as *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Her*, and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.