

## **Integrative Studies 1500 Course Descriptions**

### **INST 1500: Collisions and Decisions**

At the heart of this course will be a set of literary texts that stage—and then seek to negotiate— various collisions between human beings and the larger political, economic, and technological world in which they live. Our goal will be to understand and to appreciate how artistic decisions made by the writers of the books we will read confront us with questions about the distribution of power in the world; the capacity to imagine better and different worlds; and the degree to which reading books can deepen our understanding of the past, the present, and our relationship to both. Throughout, we shall strive to honor complexity and ambivalence—and to avoid simplifications. Inseparable from the critical inquiry that will happen in this course is an emphasis on foundational writing skills, so be prepared to receive instruction and feedback on both formal and informal writing assignments. Readings are likely to include Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Sam Quinones' *Dreamland*, Jessica Bruder's *Nomadland*, Gish Jen's *The Resisters*, and others.

### **INST 1500: Family More than Kin**

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 factors that impact 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. We will examine texts in different formats, including fiction, non-fiction, film, and personal experiences from guest speakers. I'm confident that we can build community and kinship.

### **INST 1500: National and Racial Identity in the Modern Era**

This course will trace a history of race and racism to our contemporary moment. We begin with the emergence of the modern world from the Renaissance, which marks the beginning of the invention of the modern ideologies of race, gender, and class, and finish in the mid-twentieth century. We will read reflections on race by contemporary scholars from the fields of biology, 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*.

## **INST 1500: Magical Mystery Tour**

From Beowulf to The Hobbit, from The Tempest to Harry Potter, literature that deals with heroes: magical, mysterious, on a quest--has always fascinated us and satisfied something in the human spirit that requires heroes and adventure—and quite often, journeys to a netherworld. Whether it's Charles Portis retooling the myth of the American West (is Mattie Ross the logical extension of Huckleberry Finn?), or Dashiell Hammett's iconic mystery novels, these texts give us insights into the mysteries of the human condition, archetypes of good and evil, and a geography of what we are capable of being. They show us who we are; in some ways, they map the human soul (and what could be more emblematic of the human soul than the Gospel according to Biff?). We will be dealing with the literature of heroism and mystery (how can one be heroic without being a hero); how we can behave honorably and with integrity as we navigate through a world that is dangerous, perilous—and, often, improbably wonderful. In seeking a definition of who we are, we must reference the iconography of the magical, the mysterious, and the mythic. We'll be exploring the past, the present, and the personal. This is the real adventure! The resulting journey will help us make sense of the 21st century self.

## **INST 1500: Our Voices: Race and Ethnicity in the United States**

We contemplate and write responses to authors who discuss race and ethnicity in America. Ta-Nehisi Coates (*Between the World and Me*) has “The Talk” with his teenage son about systemic ‘plunder.’ Patrisse Khan-Cullors and asha bandele (*When They Call You a Terrorist : A Black Lives Matter Memoir*) emphasize the intersection of personal experience and justice activism. Ibram X. Kendi (*How to be an Antiracist*) offers theory and language to dismantle microaggressions racist abuse. Amani Al-Khatahtbeh (*Muslim Girl: A Coming of Age*) recounts personal accounts during the rise of Islamophobia. Celeste Ng (*Little Fires Everywhere*) depicts the nation's racial caste system. Jenny Torres Sanchez (*We Are Not from Here*) and Javier Zamora (*Solito: A Memoir*) portray and chronicle the perilous migration journey children undertake from Central to North America. These readings are paired with reports from *Latino USA*, *Code Switch*, and *Democracy Now!*, which highlight U.S. sentiment and policy on immigrant and indigenous populations. Memoir, novel, and journalism help us consider the maintenance of race according to insights forged by antiracist activists.

## **INST 1500: Memoirs of Social Justice and Change**

In this course, we will read and discuss memoirs by a cross section of writers from different backgrounds and identities. The common thread is that all of the works address issues of social justice through the lens of the personal narrative, with the readings spanning time periods and cultural and social perspectives. Students will thus gain insight into issues of social justice and change by reading about the lives of those who were in the midst of such movements, or had their lives deeply affected by such movements. Graded requirements will include attendance and participation, short response papers, and a final project, as well as periodic exams. Readings may include the following representative texts: *My Father Said Yes: A White Pastor in*

Little Rock Integration, by Dunbar Ogden From the Mississippi Delta, by Endesha Ida Mae Holland The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother, by James McBride All That You Leave Behind, by Erin Lee Carr Pushed Back to Strength, by Gloria Wade-Gayles Living for Change: An Autobiography, by Grace Lee Boggs

### **Honors Program Options**

#### **Honors 1500-HN1 Monster Mashups: Our Monsters, Ourselves**

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. The thrill of their transgressive behavior has been both celebrated and commodified in literature, art, cinema, television, podcasts, gaming, 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-human hybrids that dominate popular culture. It will also identify how monster narratives are constructed, what monsters may 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 that is “a little bit monster”!

#### **HNRS 1500-HN2 Critical Inquiries: Writing Memory, Writing Memoir**

Joan Didion famously begins “The White Album,” her essay-length memoir of the 1960s, “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.” Together, we will critically consider the stories we tell ourselves, as well as the stories that have been told to us, and their impacts on our survival. We will read several examples of memoirs to explore the roles that memory and story-telling play in writers’ understandings of the world and their roles in it. We’ll theorize about why some moments in our lives become go-tos for recalling entire relationships or eras of our lives, and how crucial it may be for us to forget others. Throughout it all, we’ll experiment with a variety of approaches to writing, speaking aloud, and otherwise making sense of our experiences for ourselves and for others.