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# First-Year Seminars

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2021



**Albion College**

When I began college as a first-year student in 2005, one thing I immediately loved about college was the sheer amount of academic freedom I could sense around me. I had freedom to take the classes I wanted to take, explore the ideas I wanted to explore and engage with the departments I wanted to engage with. That academic freedom remains incredibly important to me, important to your faculty, and it is something we want to introduce you to as well. In this booklet, you will find dozens of potential First-Year Seminars offered for the Fall 2021 term, and we ask you to begin embracing your newfound academic freedom by ranking your initial preferences.

First-Year Seminars are special courses designed to create a stimulating learning environment in the small class setting emblematic of Albion's character and identity. These courses initiate intensive contact with our extraordinary group of faculty and emphasize discussion, personal growth, the opportunity for individualized student research projects and the development of strong communication skills. We hope that this First-Year Seminar, the first course you select, begins your journey to the lifelong learning that characterizes Albion graduates.

Inside your First-Year Seminar classroom, you will learn about a topic your professor is particularly passionate about, receive close attention from your faculty and begin integrating into your new academic home at Albion. On behalf of my colleagues, please let me welcome you to Albion College and personally invite you to begin planning this part of your First-Year Experience!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Schoene". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Matthew Schoene, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Sociology  
Director, First-Year Seminar Program

# First-Year Seminars, Fall 2021

All entering students enroll in a First-Year Seminar as part of the College's core requirement for graduation. Please read through the descriptions of the seminars in this booklet and identify your first four choices among these offerings.

These seminars are offered as part of the William Atwell Brown, Jr. and Mary Brown Vacin First-Year Experience.

## Africa: Myth and Reality

**Dr. Emmanuel Yewah (MLAC)**

**Course Description**—Using a variety of sources—history, geography, photographs, world fairs, newspaper articles, art, film, music, literature, documentaries, and the Internet—this course, interdisciplinary in scope and eclectic in its theoretical approaches, seeks to study as well as gain a deeper understanding of the process of construction of myths about Africa. Moreover, it attempts to deconstruct those myths so as to expose the reality hidden behind them, to acquaint students with the “other” Africa. Additionally, the course helps students develop a sense of who Africans are, what they do, feel, and hope for; reinforced by a college-sponsored experiential trip to Cameroon, West Africa spring 2022, “pandemic permitting.” Field trip fee (approx. \$1500- \$2000), valid passport, yellow fever and covid19 vaccinations are required of all students who choose to participate.

**Instructor**—A native of Cameroon, Dr. Yewah has expertise in the literatures and cultures of French-speaking peoples, with special emphasis on Africa and the Caribbean. Currently he is professor of French and comparative cultural studies in the Modern Languages and Cultures department. He earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literatures from the University of Michigan. He has published extensively on literature and politics, literature and law, literature and the environment, film adaptation of literary texts, detective fiction, and African immigrants in the United States of America.

## All Power to the People: Why the Black Panthers Still Matter

**Nels Christensen (English)**

**Course Description**—Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale weren't much older than you when they formed The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. They looked at the racial and social injustice in their neighborhoods, in their city, and in their country, and they decided to do something about it—something big and real and radical. This class takes a close look at the men and the women of the Black Panthers in order to see more clearly what we can and should be doing in our own troubled times.

**Instructor**—Nels Christensen (Ph.D., Michigan State University) lives in Albion along the banks of the mighty Kalamazoo River. He loves it and wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

## Ancient Aliens and Lost Civilizations: Archaeology & Popular Culture

**Brad Chase (Anthropology)**

**Course Description**—We live in an era of unprecedented knowledge about the human past. Archaeologists from nearly every country in the world have learned more than ever before about how ancient societies were organized and motivated to create magnificent monuments to human ingenuity like the pyramids of Egypt, Stonehenge—and so many others. Yet we also live in an era of unprecedented disinformation, fake news, and sensational claims presented as fact. The television show *Ancient Aliens*, for example, has run for *sixteen* seasons on the *History* channel making it arguably more accessible than any other source of information on the ancient past—despite nearly every episode being completely misleading from beginning to end. How do archaeologists know what they know? How can you distinguish actual knowledge from disinformation more broadly? And why do some tall tales about the ancient past seem to have such traction in our popular culture? In this course you will learn how to evaluate competing claims to knowledge through critical research while exploring the cultural significance of some truly wacky ideas. Students who choose this course will also be enrolled in Anthropology 105: Introduction to Anthropology.

**Pairing**—This first-year seminar will be paired to Anthropology 105: Introduction to Anthropology.

**Instructor**—Brad Chase (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison) is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology and has taught at Albion since 2008. He is an archaeologist whose research explores the Indus Civilization of ancient India and Pakistan. When he is not teaching courses at Albion or conducting research in India, he can be found chasing after a wily three-year old.

## Ants, Brain, Riot...and Universe: How does order emerge out of disorder?

**Christopher Rohlman (Chemistry & Biochemistry)**

**Course Description**—Have you ever wondered how birds flock, AI recognizes a cat in a picture, or a peaceful protest suddenly turns violent? If your answer is yes, this might be a course for you. In this seminar, we survey how orders and forms spontaneously emerge out of seemingly random interactions between elementary constituents in a group. Instead of abstract theories, however, we focus on specific examples from nature, society, economics, computer science, and neuroscience to learn fundamental concepts like network, feedbacks, bi-stability, critical transition, energy landscape. One crucial way to understand these complex systems is mathematical modeling. Thus, we will utilize computer simulations of the various model system throughout the seminar. Another goal of the seminar is to hone your academic skills through readings, discussions, and writings. You will learn how to ask the right questions, extract relevant information from sources, and approach the question to arrive at solutions.

**Pairing**—This first-year seminar will be paired to Chemistry 152: Principles of Chemistry.

**Instructor**—Demian Cho (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee) is a theoretical physicist interested in the fundamental natures of both spacetime and the brain. He teaches a wide range of courses, from introductory astronomy to quantum mechanics. In the past, his research involved the unification of quantum theory and gravity, the quantum nature of black holes, and gravitational wave physics. Recently, he is interested in computational neuroscience, especially how a population of neurons ‘compute’.

## Art and the Everyday

**Katie Bullock (Art & Art History)**

**Course Description**—How do we pay attention to our everyday experiences? How could refocusing attention on the often overlooked enrich our lives?

The everyday is deceptively familiar territory, often referred to as mundane or banal. In reality, it is composed of rich and complex forces, giving shape to our very lives. A major theme in contemporary art, the everyday has long been at the heart of work that explores identity and self-expression, personal relationships, social and political action, and possibilities for change. This interdisciplinary course will focus on various strategies artists employ to investigate the everyday as subject matter, while exploring and challenging notions of what art is and what it can do.

Students will be encouraged to ask questions about how we relate to our natural and built environments in our day-to-day lives, and to connect these patterns of behavior to broader themes. This class will include reading assignments, art-

making, group discussions, presentations, and frequent local field trips where we will apply practices of looking closely and thinking critically together.

**Instructor**—Katie Bullock (M.F.A., Rhode Island School of Design) is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Art and Art History Department. As a part of her practice, she catalogs and works with observed “everyday” moments and phenomena. She is interested in the complexity of truth that can be revealed through the seemingly familiar. She recently moved to Albion with her wife and two cats, and thoroughly enjoys long, aimless walks.

## Create a Scene: The Art of Improv

**Stephanie Henderson (Theatre)**

**Course Description**—In a world where nothing is guaranteed and little is understood, it is up to us to figure out how to navigate the unknown in order to face the future. Improv, as we know it, is a response to our creative selves. Without a preplanned script, we will explore our creativity through a strict set of rules (yes, that does seem like a paradox). We will explore how to free ourselves of past habits in order to embrace our own and one another’s ideas. This involves, listening, saying “yes”, trusting ourselves and others, being mindful, accepting failure and learning from it. We will truly know what it means to be a team player.

A bit of history is important so we will learn about who the pioneers in improv were as well as study the great improvisers of all time. Becoming improvisers ourselves, we will explore improvisation through action and writing. Guided exercises will teach needed skills to create improvised scenes including building ensemble, giving and taking focus, object work, and, one of the most crucial fundamentals of improv, the concept of “yes, and.” This is a class that requires full physical participation and will rely on your dependability.

**Instructor**—Stephanie Henderson earned her BA from Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA and her MFA from Michigan State University. She has had the privilege of designing costumes for opera in Italy for over six years as well as having worked for the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, Central Michigan, Opera Saratoga and Michigan State’s Opera Theatre. She will soon embark on the pursuit of her doctoral degree in Theatre History from Bowling Green State University.

Theatre has been the constant in Steph’s life, and she is always looking for ways to expand her treasure chest of theatrical endeavors and Albion College is the perfect place for her. Her title at Albion is Visiting Assistant Professor of Costume Design. However, in addition to designing productions, Steph teaches *Theatrical Costume Design, Intro to Theatre, Theatre History, Playwriting, Women in American Theatre* as well as special topics, the most recent one being August Wilson’s *America*. Steph also made her collegiate directing debut with the play, *Intimate Apparel* in the fall of 2019 and is scheduled to direct this coming fall. For over 30 years, Steph has used improv with students of all ages

including youth-at-risk students with learning disabilities as well her college classes. She recently completed several online workshops with Second City and Chicago Dramatists to ready herself for this seminar. Steph lives near Lansing with her husband and two golden retrievers. She has a son who works at Central Michigan and a horse, Monty, who resides in St. John's.

## Drugs and Society

### Eron Ackerman (History)

**Course Description**—Pharmaceutical companies marketed cocaine and heroin as modern wonder drugs at a time when social reformers were convinced that marijuana smoking causes homicidal madness. Today, marijuana is on the path to legalization while heroin is fueling an opioid crisis claiming some 70,000 American lives each year. Meanwhile, psychiatrists are reviving old indigenous therapeutic uses of Schedule-I psychedelics to treat clinical depression and alcoholism. How do we explain these dramatic medical and moral reversals? Why has the “war on drugs” failed so epically and unleashed a new set of catastrophic problems in the process? And what issues are currently arising in efforts to rethink our approach to drug control?

This seminar investigates the highs and lows of human-drug relationships across a variety of social and historical contexts, using drugs as a kaleidoscopic lens for examining issues of mental health, mass incarceration, and geopolitical turmoil. In addition to exploring theories and methods for understanding patterns of drug use in the social and (to a lesser extent) medical sciences, this seminar will alter your perceptions of how cultural norms, scientific paradigms, mass media, and politics have shaped our collective attitudes towards mind-altering substances. If feasible, we will also take fieldtrips to a regional pharmaceutical museum and a marijuana cultivation and processing center.

**Instructor**—Eron Ackerman (PhD, Stony Brook University) is a Visiting Assistant Professor of History of the Global South. His doctoral research focuses on the social and political history of cannabis in the Caribbean, and his course offerings include surveys on modern Latin America, Africa, and global environmental history. As an alternative to partisan political rancor, he views DIY subcultures as constructive spaces for inclusive community building and good-faith civil discourse. On his free time, he plays fingerstyle guitar and enjoys indie music, weird movies, and off-beat comedy.

## Earth & Public Health

### Michael McRivette (Earth & Environment)

**Course Description**—The relationship between environmental factors and the health of humans has long been recognized. References to the detrimental effects of exposure to various Earth materials can be found in ancient Chinese and Egyptian texts. The renowned classical Greek physician Hippocrates argued for the natural origination of

disease and specifically highlighted the natural variation in water chemistry as an important factor. Marco Polo, journeying through present-day eastern Iran, recounts a connection between social behaviors and local soil conditions. Such historical foundations set the stage for more recent science-based observations and investigations that describe the intimate relationship between the Earth and public health. This seminar will explore this relationship by examining its historical recognition and tracing its emergence as a critical area of multidisciplinary research in modern health science. Case studies will be used to illustrate both the detrimental effects the environment can have on health and the ways that Earth materials can be used to promote well-being. The seminar will also consider public health disparities arising from climate change and environmental exposure dictated by social inequities.

**Instructor**—Mick McRivette (Ph.D., UCLA) teaches courses in Earth and environmental science and geography and mapping, and is the Director of the Albion College Geology Summer Field Camp in the Rockies program. His research focuses on large mountain systems such as the Himalayas-Tibet and the Scandinavian mountains. He enjoys most outdoor activities, playing soccer, and traveling with his family.

## Emerging Infectious & Communicable Diseases

### Ola Olapade (Biology)

**Course Description**—The pandemic occurrence of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) with its debilitating consequences on global public health as well as the destabilization of normal social and economic activities world-wide reemphasizes the inevitable co-existence between humans and microorganisms. To effectively mitigate against the various deleterious influences of pathogenic microbes on global populations, it is important to understand in-depth the microbial world, regarding the etiology, epidemiology and prevention as well as control of common infectious and communicable diseases. This seminar will therefore broadly explore various infectious diseases caused by microscopic germs (such as bacteria, viruses and protozoa), transferred via vectors and/or fomites (such as malaria and Lyme disease) as well as those directly communicable from person to person (including Influenza, Ebola, HIV, Herpesvirus and the human papillomavirus) through group discussions, lectures, video documentaries and relevant literatures in the fields of microbiology, virology and public health.

**Instructor**—Ola A. Olapade (Ph. D., Kent State University) is a microbiologist with interests in Microbial Ecology, Environmental Microbiology, Bioremediation and Public Health. He teaches General Microbiology, Environmental Microbiology, Virology, and various seminars in Epidemiology and Public Health as well as the Virus Hunters and also contributes to the introductory sequence courses in the department. His research generally involves delineating the occurrences of microbial assemblages and enzymatic activities in various environments. For relaxation, he enjoys various sporting events, spending time with his family and travelling.



## Global Weirding: Climate Change Impacts and Solutions

**Thom Wilch (Earth and Environment)**

**Course Description**—It is an astounding fact that the ten hottest years on record globally have occurred in your lifetime. In this seminar we will learn about how climate has changed- it's not just getting warmer on average, it's also getting weirder, with more extreme events. We'll look at the numbers and work to understand what the science is saying. We'll also examine how climate change is a 'threat multiplier' with widespread impacts on public health, severe weather, flooding, forest fires, the economy, and more. The impacts are greatest on people who are disadvantaged, both in the US and globally. And, finally we'll study solutions at individual, local, national, and international levels. We'll use sophisticated online simulators to assess the efficacy of different solutions. The final team project will be to develop and propose a realistic set of climate change solutions.

**Instructor**—Thom Wilch (Ph.D. New Mexico Tech) loves geology, especially teaching about and doing research on glaciers, volcanoes, and climate change. He is interested in exploring how geology affects our lives and how humans affect the environment. Thom's research travels include trips to Iceland, Hawaii, Italy, New Zealand, and ten research expeditions to Antarctica. Recently he spent time in Washington D.C. facilitating climate research in Antarctica. Thom lives near campus in Albion and enjoys socializing, hiking, biking, and gardening.

## Intersectional Pizza: Gender, Race, Class and Food

**Trisha Franzen (Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies)**

**Course Description**—Why do we eat so much pizza? How has this regional Italian specialty become the most popular fast food in the world in a little over 100 years? This class addresses these and many other questions about pizza and our identities. We also consider the deeper issues surrounding pizza and our eating habits, such as who makes our pizza and who profits from our pizza eating. We consider the people who grow, harvest, process, transport, prepare and consume the ubiquitous and seemingly favorite food of young people in the United States using an intersectional lens. In addition to reading, discussing and writing about food and culture, the class will also harvest tomatoes, make cheese, and learn to make pizzas at our own wood-fired pizza oven. Pandemic-permitting we will have in-state or out-of-state pizza trip.

**Instructor**—Trisha Franzen, Professor of women's, gender & sexuality studies, loves history and food. She teaches the program's introductory courses in, women's history, feminist theory and sexuality studies. Her most recent book is *Anna Howard Shaw: The Work of Woman Suffrage*. She is the Master Gardener for the Albion Community Gardens.

## Into the Deep: The World's Oceans as Earth's Last Frontier

**Kelly Hallinger (Biology)**

**Course Description**—While humans have spread to nearly every corner of the Earth, the world's oceans have remained elusive and mysterious. Frigid, dark, reaching depths of up to 36,000 feet (deeper than Mt. Everest is tall) and experiencing pressures 1,000 times greater than at the surface, the deep sea is a harsh and unforgiving place. Yet life exists even at these extremities, and humans, ever curious, increasingly find new ways to study it. In this course, students will learn about oceanic exploration through a variety of lenses – biological, geological, historical, and artistic. The oceanic realms have fascinated and beguiled humans for centuries, and they serve as an excellent case study to examine how humans grapple with and respond to the uncomfortable and sometimes frightening unknown.

**Instructor**—Dr. Kelly Hallinger (PhD, Cornell University) joined the Biology Department as an Assistant Professor of Vertebrate Zoology in 2020. She specializes in studying the evolution and ecology of cavity-nesting songbirds and regularly teaches Vertebrate Zoology, Ornithology, and Introduction to Ecology, Evolution, and Biodiversity. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys writing, painting, baking large batches of cookies, and spending time with her husband, their one-year-old daughter, Labrador retriever, and cat.

## !Languages! What they Are, How they Evolve, and How we Learn Them

**Karen R. Oswald (Modern Languages)**

**Course Description**—As humans we are constantly sending and receiving messages through verbal language, but rarely do we reflect on how or why that is. We take it for granted as an inherent aspect of our humanity. We often do not even think about the issue seriously until we are confronted with the desire or need to learn a second language. In this course we will attempt to understand how languages work, how they have evolved and continue to evolve, how language is acquired, how languages can influence and be influenced by community, and how learning another language can be advantageous to individuals and groups. We will also learn how to communicate some basic messages in several different languages. There will be a field trip to Detroit in October (pandemic permitting).

**Instructor**—Professor Kalen R. Oswald (Ph.D., The University of Arizona) grew up in the Mountain West (pronounced "Mouh'en West" in his native Utah). He has also lived in the "Four Corners" area of the United States, Northwest Argentina and Southern Arizona before settling in the Midwest (first Wisconsin and now Michigan). He is fascinated by cities (especially cities in Spain) and the urban process that shapes them, but prefers living in smaller towns with easy access to camping and hiking and where there is plenty of space to play with his family (wife Amy and children

Taylor, Kendall, Lynnsey, Spencer and Kaya). This is his twentieth year at Albion College where he teaches beginning to advanced Spanish language, literature, and cultures.

## Let's Move!

### Morgan Anderson (Kinesiology)

**Course Description**—Course Description: Our bodies are meant to move and they thrive when they do! Though, how much physical activity is enough? What happens when our bodies don't get enough physical activity? In this class, we will explore the basis for our national recommendations for physical activity by reading some classic studies that explore the importance of physical activity in disease prevention. We will also explore the psychological, physiological, and behavioral costs that come with our current obesity crisis in the United States, focusing on both childhood and adult obesity. Additionally, we will move our bodies by trying different forms of physical activity (walking, yoga, Pilates, etc.) and explore the connection between physical activity and improved academic performance. Ready, set, let's move!

**Instructor**—Morgan Anderson (PhD, Michigan State University) is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology. She has taught a variety of Kinesiology classes including, The Healthy Lifestyle, Introduction to Research Methods, and The Psychology of Injury. Morgan's primary research interest is in sport related concussion, specifically understanding factors that influence baseline computerized neurocognitive test performance and examining the neurocognitive, physical, and psychosocial effects of sport related concussion. In her free time, Morgan enjoys going for long walks while listening to podcasts on pop culture, true crime, and the presidents, attempting the New York Times crossword puzzle, watching The Premier League, and playing pick-up soccer with her friends.

## Living the Life Fantastic: The Fantasy Literature and Authors That Have Captured the World's Imagination

### Mark Hoffland (Theatre)

**Course Description**—Into Harry Potter? Game of Thrones? Lord of the Rings? Or even The Walking Dead? Enjoy reading about wizards, witches, dragons, dwarves, vampires, and zombies? What do you know about the authors who imagine them, and the real-world events that inspire them? In this course, we will explore the biographies and shared inspirations of fantasy authors J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter), George R. R. Martin (Game of Thrones/A Song of Ice and Fire) J.R.R. Tolkien (The Lord of the Rings), and Robert Kirkman (The Walking Dead), as well as lesser known authors, such as Terry Pratchett (the Disc World series) and Christopher Moore (Bite Me and Scare Bleu). We will watch film adaptations, listen to interviews with the authors, and discover the inspirations for these unique worlds, characters, and storylines. We will use the medium of fantasy fiction to discuss contemporary social issues; we will read one of

Pratchett's comic novels; and we will create our own fantasy-based graphic short story using Comic Life software.

**Instructor**—Mark Hoffland has taught in the Department of Theatre since 2004. The ultimate "generalist", Mark has directed, designed, and built many productions in a long career. He has produced theatre with people of all ages and experience levels. He has judged on all levels of the MIFA one-act competition for three decades. He has been enjoying fantasy and science fiction novels since high school.

## Living Well

### Dan Mittag (Philosophy)

**Course Description**—How can academic philosophy help us achieve our goal of living well? One standard philosophical response to this question might be to ask "What is *living well*?" and to interrogate the question's assumption that "we" have this goal. These are important questions. We will take them as our starting point as we explore how philosophy can help to illuminate various aspects of our lives. This allows us to think and act differently, to think and act in ways that help us to live better lives.

**Instructor**—Dan Mittag (PhD, University of Rochester) specializes in theory of knowledge and philosophical pedagogy. He enjoys listening to music and spending time with his wife and two young kids.

## Making Medicine: How Science, Politics, and Money Shape the Medical Profession

### Craig Streu (Chemistry & Biology)

**Course Description**—Healthcare is a big business in America. Our health and our economy rely on developments in this rapidly evolving industry. Additionally, a pandemic as well as other recent events have placed the healthcare industry squarely at the center of public consciousness. How does it work and why should we all care? This course will examine the field of healthcare as a whole, but focus on the roles of physicians and pharmaceuticals within it. It is impossible to separate the profession of medicine from the business of healthcare and so the course will often and unavoidably diverge into topics of ethics, marketing, and economics.

**Instructor**—Dr. Craig Streu (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania) is a biochemist with an avid interest in molecular interventions for human health, otherwise known as drugs. He runs a bustling research lab where he works with students to develop therapeutic drugs of all types, although his most recent work focuses on cancer drugs and antibiotics. When he's not in the lab he enjoys soccer, cycling, hiking and generally being outdoors with his family and dog.

## Molecules that Changed the World

**Christopher Rohlman (Chemistry & Biochemistry)**

**Course Description**—We are living in a material world. We are dependent upon the compounds that make up our technologies, our planet, and ourselves. We have forged metals for tools, synthesized wonder drugs that cure us, polymer fabrics that clothe us, and toxins that threaten us. Human understanding of chemicals and molecules has evolved as our cultures and industries have grown, often to our benefit, but sometimes to our detriment. We will explore the nature of the elements and the chemical structures that allow them to behave as they do. How do we utilize these chemical tools and understand the impact of the choices we make? Our goal will be to learn how to use the resources available to us, in an effort to ask questions and gain understanding. Students who select this seminar will also be enrolled in Chemistry 152: Principles of Chemistry.

**Pairing**—This first-year seminar will be paired to History 102: Ancient and Medieval Worlds.

**Instructor**—Dr. Christopher Rohlman is a professor of biological chemistry. He teaches introductory and advanced courses in chemistry, biochemistry and biophysics. Chris's research focuses on understanding biomolecule structure and function, and the interactions that allow life on the cellular level. Chris is a Michigan native who has worked in California and Colorado, ultimately returning to the Midwest. His research group is driven by undergraduate students who present their work at national meetings of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He is an avid fan of music, film, sports, and the outdoors.

## Patchwork America

**Matthew Schoene (Sociology)**

**Course Description**—In the contemporary United States, we are constantly bombarded by the idea that we are divided – economically, ethnically, politically and culturally. Where did this divide come from? In this seminar, we will take the position that the real divide within this country is one of communities with different characteristics – characteristics with the potential to shape who you are, how you spend your time, what you believe and how your life is likely to turn out. Using simplistic, dichotomous designations like conservative/liberal, rural/urban, rich/poor or black/white tends to miss these core realities of community life.

Communities give us an opportunity to think about the local organization of human society. What are the economic, environmental, political and cultural structures that create the realities of different communities? How do these conditions influence the behavior of the people who call it home? Ultimately, we can never truly understand a community better than the people who live there, but we can take steps toward better understanding social diversity in the United States by examining perhaps the only thing that everyone has: a home. Students who enroll in this class will

also be enrolled in Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology. Finally, this class will also include a field trip to our closest major metropolitan area: Detroit (Fee: Approximately \$100).

**Pairing**—This first-year seminar will be paired to Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology.

**Instructor**—Matthew Schoene (PhD, The Ohio State University) is a global/transnational sociologist studying social movement activity and institutional distrust, especially in cities and countries of the European Union. Despite his global research agenda, he lived in five different states throughout his 20s (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina and Michigan) and has subsequently become very interested in how we live, work and interact within our local communities.

## Portrayals of the Family in American Sitcoms

**Allison Jendry James (Sociology)**

**Course Description**—In the United States, the image of the “traditional” family is everywhere. Where did this ideal come from? Why is the “traditional” family ideal pervasive in American culture and popular media? We will examine families in American sitcoms such as *Leave it to Beaver*, *Married with Children*, *The Simpsons*, *Family Matters*, *Home Improvement*, *Modern Family* and many more! Understanding the origin and contextual influences of the “traditional” family narrative will aid in understanding the individual and structural level inequalities that are widespread among diverse families today and their real-life implications for social policy. Through examining American sitcom families and the contexts in which families live over time, you will leave this course with not only a deeper understanding of families today and perhaps even your own family, but also finish the semester with the skills needed to be successful in college and be a part of our own FYS “family”!

**Instructor**—Allison Jendry James is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology.

## Quacks, Remedies and Cures: Treating Illness through the Ages.

**Mark Roy (Biology)**

**Course Description**—Humans have been getting sick since they inhabited the earth. What did they do to treat each other or themselves? We will study the history of remedies from ancient to modern times and in several cultures. We will also learn how to discern which remedies were and are real medicines and which were quacks (fakes). *This course is not just for pre-medicine students!* What makes a medicine real? How were home remedies in different cultures made and did they really work or were they placebos? Even today, substances are advertised as though they are medicines, but they are not. We will also walk through time in downtown Albion, learning about some of the early apothecaries and



businesses that produced remedies. The course may include a trip to the National Bottle Museum near Saratoga Springs, NY (depending on pandemic conditions).

**Instructor**—Marc Roy (Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison) is a curious neuroscientist with broad interests. He taught students in the biology department and first-year seminars at Beloit College for 13 years before moving into academic leadership. He spent five years in Iowa, eight years in Maryland, and five years in Albion and now he has returned to his first passion- teaching and conducting research with students. Marc and his wife Michelle live just a few blocks from campus. He has five children ranging in age from 16-32.

## Reel vs Real Latinxs: Representations in U.S. Film and TV

**Lucia Soriano (Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies/Ethnic Studies)**

**Course Description**—In this course, students will be introduced to the (mis)representations of Latinx people in U.S. film and television. Students will become familiar with the history behind the (mis)representations and reflect on how they consume images of Latinx people in their daily life. Students will sharpen their critical thinking and writing skills for their college career through short writing exercises and by analyzing films and media like: *Coco*, *Speedy Gonzalez*, *Superstore*, *Selena*, *Modern Family*, and *LeJuan James*. Some class meetings will take place at the Bohm Theater.

**Instructor**—Dr. Soriano was born and raised in Southern California and is the proud daughter of Mexican immigrants. She grew up fascinated by the Hollywood entertainment industry which led her to want to study U.S. popular culture. She is a teacher-scholar who is committed to creating a classroom environment where students' lived-experiences are centered as vital contributions to the learning experience. Dr. Soriano is the inaugural Postdoctoral Fellow in Ethnic Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Albion College.

## RENT and the Bohemian Life

**Maureen Balke (Music)**

**Course Description**—“The bohemian life.” What does it mean? Passion, poetry, and poverty? Life, love, and art? Opposing convention and the status quo? Living for “no day but today” and “measuring lives in love”? We will study the Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning musical *RENT* by Jonathan Larson, which is based upon the beloved Puccini opera *La Bohème*, which in turn is based upon the 1840s Parisian novel *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* by Murger. We will compare the struggles of all these “starving artists” as they “strive for success and acceptance” while enduring “obstacles of poverty, illness, and the AIDS epidemic.” Mature thematic material including issues of drugs, sexuality, discrimination, and AIDS will be discussed in the larger context of our own community, society, and the world.

Additional materials for the course include *Philadelphia*, the Academy Award-winning film starring Tom Hanks; Tony Kushner's award-winning series *Angels in America*; *Moonstruck*, the Academy Award-winning film starring Cher and Nicholas Cage; *Rocky Horror*; and selections from the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*. We will also discuss the autobiographical novel *Without You*, by Anthony Rapp, from the original cast of *RENT*. Note: No in-depth knowledge of musical terminology is required for this course.

**Instructor**—Soprano Maureen Balke (D.M. in vocal performance, Indiana University) has performed opera, musicals, and art song recitals throughout the Midwest and in several European venues, winning several competitive voice awards along the way. The desire to pursue a professional career in music developed while she grew up on a Christmas tree farm in Wisconsin with her nine siblings and parents, all of whom sang and performed music in various genres, including country/western and folk music. Always interested in poetry and languages, she has specialized in German and French art song and has released a CD of art songs by composers Joseph Marx and Anthony Taffs.

## Science, Truth and Other Enigmas

**Jeremy Kirby (Philosophy)**

**Course Description**—There is a substantive difference between, for example, astrology and astronomy. The latter conforms to the practices of our best scientific thinking, while the former is a pseudo-science at best. But how might one explain the difference between pseudo-science and real science? It might be suggested that scientists rely upon observation and obtain better predictive results than pseudo-scientists. Astrologists, however, rely upon observation, and they are rarely mistaken in their predictions. Perhaps, then, what distinguishes pseudo-science from real science is that the hypotheses of the latter may be disconfirmed while the ‘conjectures’ of the former will hold, come what may. However, Charles Darwin's critics accuse him of dealing in platitudes as well, and few of Darwin's supporters would want to classify him among the pseudo-scientists. The principle of natural selection is all about “the survival of the fittest.” And, as the critics will ask, who are the fittest, if not those who survive? Distinguishing pseudo-science from science is, thus, easier said than done. But this is precisely what we shall endeavor to do in this course.

**Instructor**—Jeremy Kirby teaches and writes on issues concerning the history of philosophy and the history of science. He has published two books concerning Aristotle's approach to science and a number of articles relating to the history of philosophy. He lives in Albion, MI.

## Sound Science

### Charles Moreau (Physics)

**Course Description**— We will explore the scientific basis of sound and music. Topics may include the wave nature of sound, design of sound-generating devices and musical instruments, digital encoding of music, and amplification. A yearlong class project will form the basis of the course. Basic math skills will be expected, and students with an interest in physical science or music performance are strongly encouraged to consider this seminar.

**Instructor**—Charles Moreau (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is a Michigan native who enjoys music and movies. When not spending time with his family, he is a (very) amateur guitar player. He even finds a little time to study condensed matter physics, in particular the way in which electrons travel through solids whose dimensions are on the order of one-tenth of one-millionth of a meter.

## To Sleep or Not to Sleep

### Tammy Jechura (Psychology)

**Course Description**—College life is full of exciting and important new experiences, including classes, sports, and a variety of social interactions. Sometimes it might seem as though there aren't enough hours in the day to enjoy all the opportunities available, but the only way to lengthen the day for activities is to reduce the time at night for sleep. Is sleep just a waste of time? Can we really sacrifice sleep for "more important" things?

This seminar will explore the importance of sleep and some of the factors that influence it. You will learn how sleep (and lack of it) can drastically impact learning, memory, performance in sports, sociality, and mental and physical health. We will examine the role of timing cues in our environment, from natural cues such as sunrise and sunset to the common alarm clock. We will explore how plants and animals, including humans, use environmental time cues to tell time and to navigate their world. Discussions will cover the evolutionary significance of sleep patterns among a variety of species, especially humans. We will also talk about the history of time-telling, from flower clocks and sundials to today's atomic clocks. Our bodies' natural daily cycles, circadian rhythms, and how they are affected by environmental time cues and other factors will be a significant part of the class as well. To tie all the topics from the class discussions together, class participants will be both active researchers and participants in studies of human sleep/wake cycles, possibly including studying jet lag with a trip to Europe (pandemic permitting). Please note that students who take this course will also be enrolled in Dr. Jechura's Introduction to Psychology course (Psychology 101).

**Pairing**—This first-year seminar will be paired to Psychology 101: Introduction to Psychology.

**Instructor**—Tammy Jechura (Ph.D., University of Michigan) began exploring nature around the time that she started to crawl and has never stopped. Her love of psychology and biology has been a driving factor in the direction of her studies. As an undergraduate, she studied homing pigeons' natural navigational abilities. Her graduate work examined the role of social cues in an animal model of jet lag recovery. As the health psychologist at Albion College, she hopes to spread her enthusiasm for scientific exploration to her students through hands-on activities and practical application of class information. Besides nature, her interests include animal behavior, photography, outdoor activities, and painting.

## Tolkien and the Middle Ages

### Christopher Riedel (History)

**Course Description**—J.R.R. Tolkien is famous today as creator of the modern fantasy genre and a source of wonder and delight to millions, but he was also a brilliant professor of medieval history, literature, folklore, and linguistics. We'll explore Tolkien's life and works, from *The Hobbit* to *The Lord of the Rings* and beyond, as a window on both the Middle Ages and what the medieval world means to us today. For instance, how might medieval readers of the epic *Beowulf* understand the lurking dragon? How did Tolkien use dragons to represent the horrors of industrialization and modern warfare? We'll examine the historical, religious and literary roots that Tolkien drew on to create the first immersive fantasy world, while critiquing modern uses and stereotypes of the Middle Ages from politics to television series. We'll explore Tolkien's own moving insights into the human condition that have made his literary masterpieces timeless classics, drawn from his experience of both the medieval and the modern worlds. Students will read primary sources from the Middle Ages along with Tolkien's own works, watch depictions of his stories, and conduct original research into the medieval origins of some aspect of Tolkien's world that appeals to their own curiosity and imagination. Previous reading of Tolkien's works is encouraged but not required. Students who choose this course will also be enrolled in History 102: Ancient & Medieval Worlds.

**Instructor**—Chris Riedel (Ph.D., Boston College) is in his fifth year of teaching at Albion College, where he teaches all the stuff that happened before Columbus (and occasionally some stuff after) – from ancient Egypt to the Roman Empire to Vikings and crusaders. His research and teaching interests include religious reform movements, wealth and charity, biography, Islamic-Western interactions, and stories of miracles and magic. When not teaching or spending time in old medieval ruins, he enjoys fantasy, science fiction, and comic books, or a bit of cooking and baking.

## 24 Frames Per Second – The Art of Stop-Motion Animation

### Michael Dixon (Art)

**Course Description**—Animation as a discipline has a long history with ever increasing audiences from adults to younger viewers. This course will nurture an experimental approach to animation as a vehicle for developing its potential as art, entertainment, and communication. We will look at a variety of animation examples to expand the possibilities for creative solutions to making moving images. The course will be rooted in the fundamentals of art and design while expanding into areas like writing, sound manipulation, and digital media. We will look at the approaches to, and production of, 2D and 3D animation with both individual and group projects. Students will cycle through developing the concept, medium, storyboarding, and production phases for each project.

**Instructor**—Michael Dixon is an artist working primarily with oil paint. He was born in San Diego, California, and received his MFA from the University of Colorado at Boulder in painting, and his BFA from Arizona State University in painting and drawing. Dixon is currently a Professor of Art at Albion College. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, Joan Mitchell Foundation Emergency Grant, Puffin Foundation Grant, Blanchard Fellowship, and Phi Beta Kappa Scholar of the Year Award. Dixon has received numerous artist residencies including the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Yaddo, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Ragdale Foundation. His work has been shown both nationally and internationally at museums, universities, art centers, alternative spaces, and galleries. Dixon explores the personal, societal, and aesthetic struggles of belonging to both “white” and “black” racial and cultural identities, yet simultaneously belonging fully to neither. The works of artists such as Robert Colescott, Beverly McIver, Michael Ray Charles, Glenn Ligon, and Kerry James Marshall have informed his work.

## “What we owe to each other,” or, How to live with others

### Jessica Kane (English)

**Course Description**—The hit TV show *The Good Place* follows “Arizona trashbag” Eleanor Shellstrop, who dies and finds herself accidentally in The Good Place. Terrified of being found out and sent to The Bad Place, she tries to learn how to be good. Hilarity, heartstring-tugging, and profound ethical considerations somehow simultaneously ensue.

This class will use *The Good Place* and its central question of “what we owe to each other” to think about your own transition to college and adulthood. You are now a member of the Albion community and an adult in the world – what

does that mean? How can you live, study, and work well as part of your communities? Over the course of the semester, we’ll explore how people have wrestled with the question of what we owe to each other in all kinds of situations through books, movies, music, and art. We’ll get to know our college and community. And we’ll start to figure out who we ourselves want to be.

**Instructor**—Jessica Kane enjoys reading, knitting, York Peppermint Patties, sci-fi/fantasy, swing dancing, taking her dogs on walks.



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