EN.501 (EN FIRST YEAR SEMINARS)

Courses

EN.501.101. FYS: For All Practical Purposes: The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics. 2 Credits.
Mathematics can be experienced as an esoteric, rigorous philosophical system that is a delightfully engaging art form. Yet, somehow, it seems that the most abstract and theoretical mathematical topics find application in practice, to solve real problems in the real world. This course explores the surprising applicability of mathematics throughout history to the present day, highlighting interesting and important ways that mathematical ideas revolutionized how we describe the natural world through physical laws, produced techniques for solving problems in a wide range of human activities, e.g. decision making, medical diagnoses and imaging, sports, finance, gambling, music, and cryptology. The only background needed is high school mathematics and an interest in participating in engaging discussions.
Prerequisite(s): Students may only enroll in and complete one First Year Seminar course.
Distribution Area: Engineering

How can women achieve successful and joyful careers in STEM fields? What barriers or impediments do women encounter? What tools can women use to overcome impediments? This course will explore issues faced by women in leadership through self-assessment, speakers, improvisation, case studies, readings, Ted Talks and other media. We will examine topics including “failure,” impostor syndrome, competition, and managing stress while focusing on developing the skills and competencies you will need to create the career you envision.
Prerequisite(s): Students may only enroll in and complete one First Year Seminar course.

EN.501.108. FYS: Leadership Theory. 3 Credits.
The course will explore the knowledge base and skills necessary to be an effective leader on a college campus. Students will be introduced to the history of Leadership Theory from the "Great Man" theory of born leaders to Transformational Leadership theory of non-positional learned leadership. Transformational Leadership theory postulates that leadership can be learned and enhanced. Students will assess their personal leadership qualities and develop a plan to enhance their leadership potential.
Prerequisite(s): Students may only enroll in and complete one First Year Seminar course.
Writing Intensive

EN.501.109. FYS: Communicating Science. 3 Credits.
The COVID-19 pandemic and the misinformation surrounding it have only reinforced the importance of science communication. On timely issues like global disease outbreaks, climate change, and gene editing, or generalized ones such as individual nutrition and healthcare, the public expects researchers to speak up. But what happens when crucial scientific information is met with a lack of understanding, or even worse, distrust from the public? In this seminar, we will examine scientific communications from multiple genres, including popular scientific magazines, newspaper articles, journal articles, social media posts, podcasts, documentaries, and TED Talks, to discover what makes technical communication successful (or not). Students will explore techniques and strategies they can use to communicate about significant issues in their own personal, academic, and professional lives. Open to all majors; no expertise required.
Prerequisite(s): Students may only enroll in and complete one First Year Seminar course.

EN.501.112. FYS: Computing Through The Ages. 3 Credits.
This course takes the student through 2000 year journey of computing and computing hardware architectures from the Salamis Tablet, the Chinese Suanpan, the Incas Yupana, Babbage Analytical engine, personal computers, and smart phones to modern data center computing machinery and the recent explosion in AI. There will be some technical discussion, but the focus of the course is on people, events, society, and culture that shaped the development of computing and computing sciences as we know them today.
EN.501.113. FYS: Turing's Shadow: Uncovering What's Hidden in STEM. 3 Credits.
In 1952, British mathematician, biologist, cryptographer, and proto-computer scientist Alan Turing was prosecuted for "gross indecency," ending his career. While Turing received a posthumous pardon in 2013, his persecution has left a long shadow on the visibility of LGBTQ+ people in science and engineering. What can we uncover about the contributions that LGBTQ+ people past and present have made to STEM? What can we learn about efforts to build greater inclusion for people with diverse genders and sexualities? What queer futures can we imagine? Students will hear from professionals and scholars from a variety of disciplines as we open STEM's closet.

EN.501.114. FYS: Gas Prices, GameStop and Toilet Paper: Innovation and American Enterprise. 3 Credits.
Why is gas so expensive? How did Reddit influence the price of GameStop shares? And where did all of the toilet paper go? This course seeks to provide students with a foundation for understanding modern business and the skills necessary to generate innovative solutions to problems-worth-solving. Course can be counted for the Foundations of American Enterprise requirement for CLE minors.

EN.501.116. FYS: Minding the Gap: Understanding the Design of Habit. 3 Credits.
There is a painful gap between what people want and what they actually do," writes Stanford psychologist B.J. Fogg. What accounts for this gap? Why do we pursue activities that seem to work in opposition to our goals? How can we develop habits and practices that align with our values, identities, and aspirations? Drawing on readings in psychology, economics, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and philosophy, this seminar will explore these questions and the broader relationship between habits (what we do), values (what we believe), and personal and professional aspiration (who we hope to become). Students will use design thinking and behavior design to their own lives to learn habits, make decisions, and develop plans for their time at Hopkins that are aligned with their values, identities, and aspirations in a manner that supports their mental and physical well-being.

EN.501.117. FYS: Combating Misinformation and Disinformation in Science. 3 Credits.
While the COVID-19 pandemic may have produced an explosion of hoaxes and conspiracy theories unprecedented in modern times, inaccurate public conceptions of science are common across human history. In this seminar, we will examine historical examples to understand how misinformation spreads and identify its consequences for public trust in science. We will also analyze effective scientific communication from multiple genres, including popular scientific magazines, newspaper articles, journal articles, podcasts, and TED Talks, and films to discover what makes scientific communication successful. Students will explore techniques they can use to identify scientific misinformation and communicate about significant issues in their own personal, academic, and professional lives. Open to all majors; no expertise required.

EN.501.119. FYS: Adulting 101: Managing Your Financial Wellness Journey. 3 Credits.
How is your financial wellness and life satisfaction related? Many debate whether money can bring you happiness and others promote ideas such as financial freedom, generational wealth, and FIRE ("Financial Independence, Retire Early"). In this course, we will consider what is required to be "financially well." We will explore the knowledge and skills required to successfully navigate your personal finances, today and into the future, through guest speakers, simulations, activities, and discussion of readings. Open to all majors; the only background needed is an interest in learning more about financial literacy, money management, and personal development.

EN.501.120. FYS: City as Campus: Discovering Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Baltimore. 3 Credits.
This course will provide students with opportunities to learn about Baltimore's exciting entrepreneurship and innovation landscape. Students will begin with the development of a "sense of place" for their new home; learning to understand both Baltimore and Johns Hopkins University through historical and social lenses and making meaning of Baltimore's current challenges, opportunities, and affordances. Students will be introduced to spaces on campus such as the Digital Media Center and FastForward and will visit local sites in Baltimore such as Baltimore's Innovation Works, Betamore, and Accelerate Baltimore. During these experiences, students will be exposed to local leaders to hear about their experiences. Back in the classroom, students will consider leadership qualities that are key to entrepreneurship and innovation and will explore their own leadership skills to understand their strengths and areas for growth. The course will focus on team-based projects and exercises, but students will also prepare short, written reflections which will provide opportunities for them to process their learning and leadership development throughout the course.

EN.501.121. FYS: AnthroDesign for Healthcare. 3 Credits.
Pictures and everything about the course in the following link: https://bit.ly/4Sqz9CN Overview: Integrating engineering design, the social sciences, and the humanities is not new. In this context, design ceases to be only a craft and assumes a strategic role in promoting change and innovation. This relationship originated with the use of applied ethnographic tools in software development. The use of interaction design (ixD) and user experience (UX) has since transcended the computer to the reinterpretation of social interactions. This course aims to introduce theoretical and applied methodologies of cultural anthropology and concrete design strategies. The tools portrayed will focus on making sense of social phenomena in relation to healthcare. AnthroDesign has the ability to give a more ethical framework for innovations involving legal and ethical considerations firmly based on sociopolitical issues and human rights. In this journey, we will look through the eyes of an anthropologist and take action with the hands of the designer.
EN.501.122. FYS: Juries to Journals: Elle Woods, Einstein, and the Meaning of Evidence. 3 Credits.
From alternate facts to disinformation to evidence-based medicine, many in modern society argue that progress relies on decisions based on “evidence” to find “truth”, although approaches to weighing evidence vary greatly. This course will explore concepts related to the identification and evaluation of evidence, analyzing and contrasting approaches in different fields of study including law, regulatory science, laboratory science, and medical research. Students will learn to apply critical analytical skills when considering evidence presented by others, including “experts”, and to appreciate the challenges and pitfalls of making their own “best case”. Course work will consist of readings and viewings, small-group presentations, in-class discussions, and very short written submissions. Some material will include a very basic introduction to topics of courtroom procedures, probability & statistics, and experimental design – but no specific prerequisites will be required. This is neither a math class nor a law class!

EN.501.123. FYS: Exploring Computer Science. 1 Credit.
This course provides first-year students with an introduction to the field and department. Faculty will lead weekly small group discussion sections on topics of interest related to the discipline. Upper-year CS majors will serve as peer mentors for each group.

EN.501.124. FYS: Design Cornerstone. 2 Credits.
Discover how multidisciplinary engineering design results in more effective engineering, communication and problem solving with teams. This hands-on, project-based course gives students the ability to understand, contextualize, and analyze engineering designs and systems. By learning and applying the multidisciplinary design process, students will be more prepared to solve complex problems in a variety of engineering disciplines. Lectures focus on teaching a tested, iterative design process as well as techniques to sharpen creative analysis. Guest lectures from all disciplines illustrate different approaches to design thinking. This course will culminate in a cornerstone design project. Distribution Area: Engineering

EN.501.125. FYS: Envisioning Antarctica: Science, Diplomacy, and the Arts. 3 Credits.
This seminar will explore the human experience in Antarctica and the question: What should be the human use of the continent? Students will consider the influence of scientists, diplomats, visual artists, and writers toward building an understanding of the frozen continent, determining its uses, and interpreting its beauty. Was it serendipity or curiosity that led scientists to discover the ozone hole, examine the Dry Valleys for insights into Mars, or see penguins as sentinels of climate change? The west coast of Antarctica is one of the most rapidly warming places on the planet. Why did twelve nations agree to set aside the continent for peace and science when they had interests in land, fish, and minerals? The protocols of the Antarctic Treaty, which governs peaceful use, come up for possible renewal in 2048. How do artists, writers, and filmmakers visualize and chronicle the vast wilderness for people who will never experience it firsthand? Recent accounts focus less on the power of cold in Antarctica and more on the fragility of its ecosystems to warming. What is the future of Antarctica? The first part of the seminar traces historical ties with Antarctica—exploration, territorial claims, scientific discovery. Students will read journals of explorers, watch videos of expeditions, and meet with former diplomats and scientists. The second explores ideas, values, and visions for the future—commons governance versus territoriality, wilderness versus development, conservation versus exploitation, regulated tourism versus unlimited travel. Throughout, artists’ and writers’ works will animate the discussions. Students will experience a year living and working in Antarctica through an award-winning documentary. Also, we will examine Antarctica as a laboratory for exploring the habitability of earth and the secrets of space. The final weeks will culminate in student visioning of these various perspectives. Distribution Area: Engineering

EN.501.126. FYS: Communicating with Other Intelligences - Artificial, Alien, Animal. 3 Credits.
How do other intelligences - be they machine-made, of extraterrestrial provenance, or our nearby animal kin - shape our understanding of language and our modes of communication? This seminar examines the social, economic, and ethical implications of interacting with and learning alongside algorithms, fungi, “digital assistants,” octopi, and other “more-than-human beings”. We will consider artificial intelligence, machine learning, and human-animal interaction from the perspectives of philosophy, science, and popular culture, including a project that will examine the possibilities and challenges of emerging AI tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, Stable Diffusion, and the phenomenon of “deepfakes.” Distribution Area: Engineering

EN.501.127. FYS: Designing a Just Future. 3 Credits.
This seminar explores a deeper understanding of empathy’s potential and limitations within the broader context of design justice. Students will be introduced to ongoing debates about “design thinking” and “human-centered design.” We will explore how social and technological forces have complicated such concepts and deepened their relevance for building systems and products that address problems worth solving. Readings such as Sara Hendren’s What Can a Body Do?, Sasha Costanza-Chock’s Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the World We Need, and Kat Holmes’s Mismatch will provide a foundation for critical dialogue on principles of inclusive design, community advocacy, and ethical empathy. Come prototype tools for a more just and humane society.
EN.501.129. FYS: The Climate Game. 3 Credits.
We know the choices consumers make contribute to climate change, that the way we live in cities contributes over a third of all greenhouse gases, and that individual behavior changes can make a positive difference. We also know that children learn to follow rules, to experiment with trial and error, and to generate strategies through playing games. We know that adolescents can learn negative attitudes by playing violent video games. And we know that when adults play games, the activities help maintain mental acuity and reflexes. But what effect does playing games have on adolescents and adults when it comes to learning new information and changing attitudes toward positive action? Could playing games help resolve behavioral contributions to climate change? This seminar explores the effects of playing games on young and older adults. Moreover, we will determine what factors make a difference — type of stimuli, type of engagement, duration of engagement, type of interaction? And moreover, importantly, we will use the findings to build a card and/or board game about sustainability needs and practices that can make a difference in individual lives for a target adult audience.

EN.501.131. FYS: What Comes Next? Critical Perspectives on Technological Innovation. 3 Credits.
Emerging technologies offer the potential for transformative advancements, including longer and healthier lives, increased efficiency and safety, and enhanced communication and global connectivity. At the same time, technological innovation often outpaces our societies—our legal regulations and policies, social and political frameworks, and cultural norms. New technologies come with new challenges and risks, which require careful attention and scrutiny to prevent new or renewed harms and injustices. In this seminar, we will consider a variety of technological innovations to examine their social, cultural, political, and environmental ramifications. Students will develop their abilities to think critically and ethically about technology through real-world cases and examples, both individually and in groups. Topics will include artificial intelligence and algorithmic culture, digital media, automation, fast fashion, healthcare technology, and more. This seminar requires no previous background or expertise.

EN.501.132. FYS: Water, Health, and the City. 3 Credits.
How does water shape the health of Baltimore and its environs? To answer that, we can expand our idea of “health” to investigate water’s influence on individuals, neighborhoods, industries, and the Chesapeake ecosystem at different times and over different scales. We will approach Baltimore’s water from an interdisciplinary perspective, with attention to (1) the concepts that scientists, engineers, and humanists have employed to comprehend water’s influence on the urban ecosystem, (2) the policies that have shaped water’s costs, distribution, and use, and (3) the disasters and injustices that have affected our region’s human and non-human inhabitants. We’ll also assess the role played by our university in Baltimore’s water history. We supplement our weekly discussions and individual projects with collaborative mapping, blogging, and field trips to sites in and around Baltimore.

EN.501.133. FYS: Influencers: Contemporary Media and Leadership. 3 Credits.
This seminar examines leadership “on screen,” particularly how contemporary media represents advocacy, conflict resolution, team development, and persuasive communication. Discussions of films, television programs, and social media content will analyze the political and cultural norms that shape representations of individual power and leadership ethics. Through a blend of film screenings, discussions, and project-based learning, students will gain a unique perspective on pop culture’s evolving views of what it means to influence others. Films under consideration include Barbie, Mending the Line, Hidden Figures, and Apollo 13.

EN.501.134. FYS: The Leadership Challenge. 3 Credits.
This experiential and discussion based course is designed specifically for first year Johns Hopkins University Clark Scholars. In this course, students will engage in discussions with current university leaders (students, faculty and staff) as they learn about the history, services and involvement of Johns Hopkins University as well as the contributions made by Mr. Clark. Students will explore leadership concepts and topics guided by the required text, The Leadership Challenge. The experiential component will enhance classroom content and expose students to the on- and off-campus involvement opportunities available.

EN.501.135. FYS: Breaking Through: Readings and Techniques for Imagining the Future. 3 Credits.
“Wicked problems,” are those that elude a singular answer. Though issues like climate change fit this description, many opportunities for innovative responses to such challenges exist. In this seminar, students will engage a range of discourse—from the dystopian fiction of George Saunders and Black Mirror to case studies and the United Nations’ goals for sustainable development—to identify and explore “problems worth solving” as testing grounds for novel social, technological, and cultural innovations. Students will then use a variety of tools and techniques introduced in the seminar to analyze their chosen problems and related case studies to imagine what comes next.

EN.501.136. FYS: Math in the Movies. 3 Credits.
What does cinema reveal about the world of mathematics? This seminar examines full-length feature films and their themes relating to mathematical thinking, the use (and misuse) of math, depictions of mathematicians, and insights into the profession. During class, we will discuss films, watch clips, and interpret scenes. Movies under consideration include A Beautiful Mind, The Man Who Knew Infinity, The Imitation Game, Moneyball, Hidden Figures, Good Will Hunting, Proof, and Gifted. No expertise in mathematics (or film) required.