

Fall 2019
First Year Composition

Inspired by Nature

The natural world is a source of inspiration and fascination for many of us. In this section of First Year Composition, we will evaluate writings that celebrate nature and raise questions about our roles as environmental advocates and stewards. We will also explore the aesthetic, ethical and philosophical issues that often characterize writing about the natural world.

The Peculiar “I”

In this class, we will use writing to explore and question ourselves and our communities. How do we craft our own selves, voices, and perspectives on the page? Further, how do we confront the voices and perspectives of others? We will work to develop your own written voice through ongoing activities that immerse us into style, tone, craft, and sound.

Joining the Conversation

All around us, important conversations are transpiring. You might find them inspiring, frustrating, or even mind-boggling. In this course, you’ll read diverse “conversations” on many topics, and you’ll join at least some of them—because you have something worthwhile to say. To that end, you’ll work to hone your writing skills and develop your voice. Jump in. Join the conversation.

From Tricksters to Truth

This section of First Year Composition will focus on some of the many ways that artifice has shaped our world, particularly with respect to politics, commerce, and popular culture. An emphasis on developing critical thinking skills, media literacy, and an awareness of common cognitive blind spots will guide our efforts to become less vulnerable to deception and manipulation.

Memory, Identity, and Society

This section explores the intersection of memory, identity, and narrative as they impact people’s relationship to society, using ads, newspapers, essays, films, and a novel. We’ll start by working on analysis, argument and narrative, then examine narrative as it relates to memory, identity, and society in the novel *Pachinko*. Finally, we’ll analyze films using the themes we have been exploring.

American Pop Culture

In this section of First Year Composition, we will be exploring “popular culture” in America, asking questions like: What is “pop culture”? How does it differ from other forms or aspects of culture? We will also engage a number of elements that constitute this theme, such as music,

film, literature, and advertising, investigating how pop culture has evolved over time and some of the ways that these aspects influence our perceptions, ideas, choices, and lives.

Human Rights

Human rights: What are they? Are they universal or, instead, local and culturally bound? How do human rights or a lack thereof influence the lives of ordinary people? These and other related questions will be considered through a variety of assignments in this section of First-Year Composition as the common foundation for work on thinking, reading, writing, revising, and discussing.

Deconstructing Disney

In this class, we will focus on the work and influence of the Walt Disney Co. on U.S. and world cultures while developing our writing and communication skills. For generations, Disney has been an American icon. We will begin the semester by analyzing the ways in which individual Disney films construct value messages within particular historical contexts before examining the larger impact of the Disney Company as a corporation and a force of cultural export. Topics may include: the line between homage and appropriation, the politics of representation, the influence of media on childhood, the impact of the Disney Corporation on copyright law, the globalization of American culture, and more.

Friendly Persuasion

In this section of FYC, we explore powerful written persuasion. In a world of digital shaming and extreme rhetoric, which techniques bring about successful and beneficial change? Is "positive manipulation" a myth? How do the ideas of Aristotle (for example) impact modern arguments? Let's discover our own answers and learn to win arguments without losing those who might disagree.

Questioning Authority

Everyone wants to question authority. But are there right and wrong ways to do it? And what do we mean by "authority"? What different kinds of authority constrain us? And are there any times when we don't want to question authority? With a major emphasis on current political/social events and conditions, this section will take a close look at our concepts of authority and what we do or don't do when we question that authority.

Facing the Unknown

We will explore the unknown, and the ways in which it manifests itself in our lives, in three aspects: fear of difference and the "other," especially in regards to human interaction and diversity; fear of change, especially in regards to new technology and how it affects our lives; and fear of the supernatural, and what mythology tries to teach us.

Medical Mysteries

In this section, we will be detectives, solving medical mysteries across history and the recent past—in solving these cases, we will examine not only medicine and science, but also ethics and social justice, while considering the political and social effects of science and medicine.

The Average American Myth

What constitutes an “average” American? Does such a person exist? Is “average” a norm or a myth? How are the demographics of our country changing, and what are the challenges that change brings? As a country, do we embrace change or do we fear it? We’ll explore this topic through our reading, writing, and classroom conversations.