



KEAN

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

First Year Seminar (FYS)

Develop University-level skills
while learning about
fascinating and timely topics in
multiple disciplines

School of General Studies
Kean University

What is First Year Seminar?

First Year Seminar is open to first-year students exclusively. In a small classroom setting, students will be encouraged to find satisfaction and enjoyment in reading. Students will develop critical reading skills that can be transferable to various genres and texts in order to prepare them for the various materials they will be reading in college.



Goals of First Year Seminar

- Interdisciplinary inquiry
- Introduce students to college-level academic work
- Prepare students for more advanced readings
- Reinforce students' awareness of different sources
- Build community through a small class experience

A look inside some of the courses offered

ID 1500*01: The Happiness Project

This seminar focuses on the concept of Happiness across disciplines, communities, and cultures by studying the subject through a variety of different lenses: philosophical, economic, spiritual, psychological, narrative, and historical, to name a few. This multimedia course includes the viewing of documentaries, films, and interviews, as well as the reading of excerpts from autobiographies, newspaper articles, and academic journals. The course is designed to enhance critical thinking, reading, and annotation skills necessary for a successful college experience. Students will be responsible for in and out of classroom activities, formal and informal writing assignments, as well as their own final “Happiness Project.”

Faculty: Abigail Maguire

ID*1500*02: Impeachment in US History and Memory

Dive headfirst into an impeachment hearing! In this immersive and experiential FYS, students will take an historical tour of presidential impeachments. In our sixteen weeks together, we will explore the relationship between politics and the media, enter the world of the Nixon impeachment inquiry and decide the political fate of the president, and conduct firsthand research in the Kean archives College Newspaper Collection, to explore how students at Kean were talking about Nixon and Watergate.

Faculty: Abigail Perkiss

ID*1500*03: Women in Science

This Interdisciplinary Seminar series is designed to introduce students to readings from a variety of genres and disciplines using the book, *Rosalind Franklin, The Dark Lady of DNA*, as an anchor text. Sixty-two years after Rosalind Franklin’s death how far have we come? Through faculty guided readings and discussions, students will be encouraged to explore ideas, build an understanding of the topic and explore themes of social justice and biology that still riddle the field of research today. Freshmen will have the amazing opportunity to access the Rosalind Franklin Papers, which include her correspondence, diaries and laboratory notes, giving them the platform to increase reading and information literacy skills as they become familiar with and determine which strategies are appropriate for specific types of readings. This interdisciplinary seminar series intends to open up new areas of interest and encourage students to think in more than one way.

Faculty: Sharmistha Das Iyer

ID*1500*04: Being Thirteen

Being 13 marks a pivotal moment in our lives, both within and outside of ourselves. It is perceived as a transformational age by many cultures, marked by rites of passage, physical changes, and our realization that there is a whole other world out there. Using readings from multiple genres and disciplines, as well as student-centered activities, this seminar will explore concerns and celebrations across cultures, the evolution of “risky behavior” and Grade 8 health education curricula, the portrayal of 13-year-olds in the arts, and how place-of-birth shapes that time in our lives.

Faculty: Lydia Kaplan

ID*1500*05: All About “Why”: The Science of Cause and Effect

Science does a great job of answering “what” questions. How good is it at answering “why” questions? This course examines one of the central concepts in scientific explanations: cause and effect. To get a firm grip on what qualifies as satisfying causal explanations that answer “why” questions, we will dive into statistics, philosophy, computer science, and the scientific method. Throughout the course, we will read *The Book of Why* by UCLA computer science professor Judea Pearl and Dana Mackenzie, who offer the metaphor of a three-tiered “Ladder of Causation” to depict increasingly sophisticated approaches to causal explanations.

Faculty: Sean Keegan-Landis and Giancarlo Labruna

ID*1500*06: Rocking the Vote: Women’s Suffrage, Young People, and the Discordant Path toward Enfranchisement in America

The year 2020 marks one-hundred years since the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote, and thirty years since the non-partisan



organization Rock the Vote was founded to increase the political participation of Americans under the age of 25. This course traces two interrelated themes: the path toward greater access to voting rights for women in the early twentieth-century and the roles of popular culture, social media, and young people in political engagement during recent Presidential elections. It focuses on the literary and rhetorical strategies women used to gain the right to vote in the early twentieth century and juxtaposes that with the rhetoric and practice of youth voting and in the contemporary period.

Faculty: Bridie Chapman

ID*1500*07: Creating An-Other: The Construction of Monsters

This course will analyze the scientific, political, ethical, cultural, and historical boundaries that construct and create monsters, especially beings that seem human but are so diverse or strange that we are repelled yet fascinated. A targeted lens where “human” and “monster” intersect will explore these boundaries found within Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*. Within the work of this Nobel Prize author, the stark contrast of acquiescence and opposition coalesce to examine what it may be like to live as An-Other, anyone forced to live outside the limits of acceptance.

Faculty: Dena Arguelles

ID*1500*10: Coming to America

The text for this course is Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, written in 1906 it portrays the harsh conditions immigrants were living in as they were exploited for their labor in industrialized cities across the United States. This course will view the struggles of the immigrants, past and present, through the lens of history, education and public policy. This course will give a voice to the issues, needs and concerns of the socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals who came to this country to search of a better life.

Faculty: Susan Ahern

ID*1500*17: Pandemics

This First Year Seminar will examine the history of pandemics in light of today's struggle with the global spread of coronaviral infections. Students will be introduced to the complexities of combatting infectious disease, including the need for effective therapies and care, the risk of societal panic and misinformation, the rationale for policies involving quarantine and travel restrictions, and potential disruptions to trade and resource distribution. Students will learn from various forms of communication, including: social media, popular news feeds, documentary and blockbuster films, non-fiction science writing for a general public, and technical scientific articles for an "expert" audience.

Faculty: Marshall Hayes and Xurong Kong



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First Year Seminar webpage:

www.kean.edu/academics/college-liberal-arts/school-general-studies/first-year-seminar-fys-students

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