



KEAN

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

First-Year Seminar (FYS)

Develop University-level skills while
engaging with fascinating and relevant
topics in multiple disciplines.

School of General Studies
Kean University

What is the First-Year Seminar?

The 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 the First-Year Seminar

- Promote interdisciplinary inquiry
- Introduce students to college-level academic work

- Reinforce students' awareness of different sources
- Prepare students for more advanced readings
- Build community through a small class experience

There are two types of FYS courses offered in Fall 2021

(1) The Theme-based FYS courses focused on specific themes and questions around an anchor text selected by the instructor and

(2) The Transformative Text courses which all share the same acclaimed novel as the anchor text and address themes in the book. There will campus events planned in conjunction with this year's Transformative Text: *The Poet X*.

See more information below!

Course descriptions for the Theme-based FYS courses offered in Fall 2021

ID 1500*51: The Modern Day Eat, Pray, Love

This course will focus on the importance of modern-day self-care. *Eat. Pray. Love.* is a story about pleasure, devotion, and balance. In a world where everyone is expected to run on full steam, this course will discuss how to focus more on self-identity and how we view our personal needs. Students in this course will deepen their understanding through the use of weekly journal assignments to catalog their journey. Readings in this course will relate to Pleasure (eat), Devotion (pray), and Balance (love). Students will have a chance to discuss and work together to form an understanding of the topic.

Monday, Thursday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Faculty: Melissa Libbey

ID*1500*52: My God, It's Full of Stars: Us and the Universe in Tracy K. Smith's *Life on Mars*

The anchor text for this Interdisciplinary Seminar is *Life on Mars* (2011) by Tracy K. Smith, contemporary African-American poet and recent US Poet Laureate. The poems in *Life on Mars* connect the smallest domains of human existence to the farthest reaches of the universe. We will explore the book's wide-ranging ideas as well as the Earthling cultures and experiences that shaped them: the kitsch, paranoia, and sci-fi dreams of 1970-90s America; the arms race of the

Reagan era; Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey; the marvels revealed by the Hubble Telescope, which Smith's father helped build; the African-American writers' group that nurtured Smith as a young poet; and more. History, film, music, art, and science will ground our historical knowledge with the texture of life and enrich our experience of the poetry.

Monday, Thursday, 09:30AM - 10:45AM

Faculty: Shannon Case, Ph.D.

ID*1500*53: Make a Difference: Explore a Life Devoted to Improving the World

You're starting college, so everyone's asking, "What do you plan to do with your life?" You're a do-gooder at heart, and want to make a difference, to help others, to change the world. But how? Doing what? This course thinks seriously about these questions. In this class, we'll prepare for a life devoted to making the world better. We'll examine the most pressing issues facing the world today (the environment, politics, pandemics, nuclear war, AI risk...) and how each of us can positively contribute to them. We aim for each student to answer that question: "What should you do with your life?"

Tuesday, Thursday 02:00PM - 03:15PM

Faculty: Sean Keegan-Landis

ID*1500*54: Being Thirteen

Being 13 is 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. The text for this course is Trevor Noah's autobiography, *Born a Crime*.

Monday, Wednesday 04:30PM – 05:45PM

Faculty Lydia Kaplan



ID*1500*55: 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 for a better life.

Tuesday, Thursday, 11:00PM - 12:15PM

Faculty: Susan Ahern, Ed.D.

ID*1500*56: Hidden Figures in Biology

This interdisciplinary seminar 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.

Wednesday 01:55PM - 12:45PM

Faculty: Sharmistha Das-Iyer

ID*1500*57: A Study of Monsters: The Necessity and Danger of Creating Another

This seminar uses Kazuo Ishiguro's fictional text, *Never Let Me Go*, to unveil the contemporary societal, philosophical, and scientific constructions of human monsters. Within the targeted lens of this Nobel Prize author, the stark contrast of necessity for and the precarious existence of these diverse beings becomes clear. In addition, close readings from multiple genres will reveal the dangerous and liminal space of inclusivity and exclusion. Simultaneously, *A Study of Monsters* encourages deeper understanding, fluency in reading and application of reading strategies culminating in a transdisciplinary presentation and paper discussing why we need monsters, why we make monsters, and what it may be like to be treated as one.

Tuesday, Friday, 12:30PM - 01:45PM

Faculty: Dena Arguelles

ID*1500*58: The Most Tragic Problem of Our Time Is Silence

Traditionally crime is regarded as a two-party affair: the criminal and the victim. Only in the latter half of the 20th century did pressure mount on passers-by to intervene, disparaging those who didn't as complicit. We will look at memoirs written by victims of large-scale violence condemning bystanders, explore the psychology of the bystander effect and study documentaries on experiments testing the bystander effect, consider Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign shaming "the silence of our friends," and revisit the most sensational bystander story of our time - the 1964 Kitty Genovese murder case. Students will test their own limits and potential for civic engagement and advocacy.

Tuesday, Thursday, 02:00PM - 3:15PM

Faculty: Dennis Klein, Ph.D.



[See below for the course description for the Transformative Text FYS courses offered in Fall 2021](#)

Transformative Text FYS Courses

These First-Year Seminar courses focus on themes inspired by Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X*. The winner of the National Book Award in 2018, *The Poet X* is a novel-in-verse that follows fifteen-year old Xiomara Batista as she navigates the pressures of Harlem, high school, her faith, and her family. The book addresses a range of interrelated themes such as community, family, art, education, religion, immigration, gender, and race. The course uses *The Poet X* as anchor text to encourage students to develop critical reading skills, to build community, and to think about contemporary issues in an interdisciplinary framework.

ID*1500*02: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Monday, Wednesday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Faculty: Charles Brown

ID*1500*03: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Tuesday, Thursday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Faculty: Kim Daniel-Robinson, Ph.D.

ID*1500*04: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Tuesday, Friday 09:30AM - 10:45PM

Faculty: Joshua Burnett

ID*1500*05: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Wednesday, 11:00AM - 12:45PM

Faculty: Mia Fiore, Ph.D.

ID*1500*06: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 08:00AM - 08:50PM

Faculty: Jennifer Van Dyk

ID*1500*07: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Monday, Thursday, 02:00 - 3:15PM

Faculty: Marjorie Williams Cooper, Ph.D.

ID*1500*08: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Monday, Wednesday, 09:30AM - 10:45PM

Faculty: Kisha Dasent

ID*1500*01: Transformative Text: *The Poet X*

Monday, Thursday, 09:30AM - 10:45PM

Faculty: Tamara Hart

*** The FYS courses originated as critical reading courses; when registering for these FYS courses students may see the notation ID1500 Critical Reading or Critical Reading and Community included in the description.**

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