



KEAN
UNIVERSITY
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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 and seminar-style discussion. Students will develop critical thinking skills that are transferable to various genres and disciplines in order to prepare them for the various materials they will be reading in college.

Each FYS course addresses a unique theme in order to engage first-year students in relevant topics and to fulfill a general education requirement **simultaneously**. Topics for these courses range from disability awareness to the study of monsters.



Goals of the First Year Seminar?

- To promote interdisciplinary inquiry
- To introduce students to college-level academic work
- To reinforce students' awareness of different sources
- To prepare students for more advanced readings
- To build community through a small class experience

ALL MAJORS WELCOME!



Sections Offered for Fall 2022

GE 1855*01: *Disability Justice: Advocacy, Activism, and Allyship*

This course will introduce students to the basics of the disability justice movement. Coined by Patty Berne and other members of the performance group Sins Invalid, disability justice centers on building a sustainable future where disabled people are supported, valued, and granted equal access. Disability justice centers on ten core principles. In this class, we'll dive into each principle, and we'll explore how disabled activists have mirrored, honed, and practiced these core values.

Activists leading the disability justice movement include scholars, poets, performance artists, visual artists, and others. Designed as a Disability Studies course, the class will tie together interdisciplinary content from History, English, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Arts, Education, Social Work, African American Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Queer Studies. Collectively, we'll use our course readings and discussions to explore our own relationships to disability, our personal identity politics, and our commitments to allyship. We'll think about how we can build a more inclusive campus and how we can take these lessons out of the classroom into the world at large.

Monday, Wednesday 4:30 PM – 5:45 PM

Faculty: Nicole Schroeder, PhD

GE 1855*02: *Because the Truth Matters*

In this course, students will learn how to evaluate the most important issues of our time by reading and watching a broad range of viewpoints in the news. Students will also subscribe to newspapers.

Wednesday 12:30 – 3:15 PM

Faculty: Jam Balakian, PhD

GE 1855*03: *All About 'Why?': The Puzzle of Cause and Effect*

Science is great at answering “what” questions. But how about “why” questions? This course examines cause and effect through science, philosophy, statistics, and puzzles. This course centers on *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. The first rung, SEEING, is noticing associations or correlations. The second rung, DOING, is intervening (via experiments) to determine their causal results. The third rung, IMAGINING, is employing counterfactuals to distinguish how the world actually

is from how the world would have been had you intervened differently.

This course fosters interdisciplinary inquiry in the areas of philosophy, science, math, social science, econometrics, and computer science. At its center would be learning about the differences between correlation and causation, in particular the roles that scientific experimentation and counterfactual reasoning play in understanding these differences.

Tuesday, Thursday 2:00–3:15 PM

Faculty: Sean Keegan-Landis

GE 1855*04: The Happiness Project

What is happiness? What makes you happy? In this class, we will explore the answer to these questions by examining the concept of happiness across disciplines, communities, and cultures. We will look at the subject through a variety of different lenses: philosophical, economic, spiritual, psychological, and artistic, to name a few. This is a multimedia course and includes the viewing of documentaries, films, and interviews, as well as the reading of excerpts from magazines, poetry, memoirs and academic journals. Students will be responsible for informal writing assignments, class discussions, as well as their own Happiness Project.

Tuesday, Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 PM

Faculty: Abby Maguire

GE 1855*05: Bodies, Minds and Spirits Soaring

The best advocate for you is you, but what do you want? So many messages are being shared via traditional and social broadcasts, and all other staples of society. It is easy to get flooded, overwhelmed, confused and lose sight of what you think as an individual. Taking the time to take care of yourself physically, mentally and spiritually is of utmost importance. This course will investigate these topics by reading Twyla Tharp's *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*.

Monday, Thursday 9:30 – 10:45 AM

Faculty: Vanessa Bell Despinos, EdD

GE 1855*06: A Study of Monsters: Global and Transdisciplinary Theories of Our Fascination with and Creation of Them

Using several excerpts from literature and several explanations from Philosophical, Cultural, Historical, Scientific, and Psychological texts, students will study a variety of Monster Types and Monster Theories. From hybrids to humans to societal constructs, monsters seem to serve a portentous and often stereotypical purpose to simultaneously relieve and create anxiety about

the unknown. From the middle ages to contemporary movies, monsters appear again and again to offer answers to our deep seated fantasies and fears.

Each week a new monster will be studied in correlation with an anchor theory that moves through time and discusses gender, race, and societal constructs.

Tuesday, Friday 2:00 - 3:15 PM

Faculty: Dena Arguelles

GE 1855*07: Eat. Pray. Love: The Modern-day Memoir

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. This course will focus on the importance of the modern-day memoir. *Eat. Pray. Love.* is a story about pleasure, devotion, and balance, but mostly it's about reflection. 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 12:30 - 1:45 PM

Faculty: Melissa Libbey

NOTE: This is a paired course. Students must take GE 1855*7 together with GE 1000*7. **GE 1000*7 meets on Tuesday 9:30am to 10:45am.** The Transition to Kean (T2K) GE 1000 course is an extension of the New Student Orientation experience. This course is designed to help new students adjust to academic and student life at Kean.

GE 1855*08: Being 13

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, including peer-reviewed literature, 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 4:30 - 5:45 PM

Faculty: Lydia Kaplan

GE 1855*15: The Body Is Not an Apology: Unpacking Identity

This course will engage in discussion around the idea of identity in all its various forms, specifically as it relates to the body. We will explore topics such as body shame, gender identity, sexuality and race politics, toxic masculinity and many other contemporary topics through the lens of the body as an anchor to identity. Students will learn to move from the personal to the political by reading various kinds of texts – memoir excerpts, personal essays, scientific articles, newspaper and magazine articles, editorials and poetry. We will explore these ideas through a variety of disciplines and examine how our identity and experiences are shaped by this.

Monday, Thursday 2:00 – 3:15 PM

Faculty: Tamara Hart

NOTE: This is a paired course. Students must take GE 1855*15 together with [GE 1000*15](#). [GE 1000*15 meets on Wednesday 9:30am to 10:45am](#). The Transition to Kean (T2K) GE 1000 course is an extension of the New Student Orientation experience. This course is designed to help new students adjust to academic and student life at Kean.

GE 1855*27: Diversity and Inclusion in All Boys Aren't Blue

This course will focus on topics related to diversity and inclusion in the autobiography, *All Boys Aren't Blue*. The class will read the Common Read text and discuss and expand on the themes in the book. This course will foster interdisciplinary inquiry and analyze the themes in the book from psychological and sociological perspectives. Students will have an opportunity to review their personal experiences, as well as gain an understanding of their views on themes from the book. In addition, students will be introduced to research methodology and gain experience with literature reviews.

Tuesday, Thursday 11:00 – 12:15 PM

Faculty: Kim Daniel-Robinson, PhD

NOTE: This is a paired course. Students must take GE 1855*27 together with [GE 1000*27](#). [GE 1000*27 meets on Tuesday 12:30pm to 1:45pm](#). The Transition to Kean (T2K) GE 1000 course is an extension of the New Student Orientation experience. This course is designed to help new students adjust to academic and student life at Kean.



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