FIRST SEMINAR SOCIAL WORLD (FSSO)

FSSO 119. Philanthropy in America. 4 Units.
This four-credit course provides an introduction to various dimensions of philanthropy and volunteerism. Using the seminar format and an array of interactive activities, we will conduct a broad but intellectual inquiry into the systems and ethics of giving time and money to charitable causes. In four units of inquiry, we will consider the giving traditions that have influenced American culture and society since its colonial days. We will examine the role that the Third Sector (also known as the Independent or Nonprofit Sector) plays as an agent of social change in a functioning democratic republic. We will explore the nature of donors and volunteers and take a critical look at the missions and goals of a cross section of nonprofit organizations. We will wrestle with ethical issues related to philanthropy and consider the giving patterns of different social, religious, and ethnic groups. We will also turn our collective thinking to how the nonprofit sector might better serve the social needs of the nation and the world. At the end of the semester, we will reflect on how our ideas about philanthropy have changed over the course of fifteen weeks.

FSSO 120. Poverty and Social Policy. 4 Units.
This course has two major foci: poverty and social policies designed to ameliorate poverty. Sociologists in the United States and in other countries have made major contributions to studies of poverty. They have primarily focused on income-based poverty, but more recently, have also studied other forms of poverty. In this class, we will examine different conceptualizations and measures of poverty. We will then examine short-term and long-term poverty experiences and their potential consequences. We will then turn to explanations of poverty: why are some individuals more likely to experience periods of low income than others? While the United States will be the focus of the course, we will contrast the experiences of other countries. The second component will be an analysis of social policies designed to ameliorate poverty. In particular, we will examine the development and retrenchment of welfare states and other social policies, the various goals of social policy, and the different impacts social policies have had on individuals, families, other groups, and the country overall. This discussion will reflect on experiences of other countries.

FSSO 128. Movers and Shakers: Leadership. 4 Units.
"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" (Margaret Mead, 1901-1978). This seminar is about understanding what enables people to make a generative impact on the world. Students will explore the socio-emotional and motivational characteristics of effective leaders and their ability to create positive change. Students will also be encouraged to develop their own theories of leadership and to explore their personal approaches to making a difference. The seminar will profile leaders from different occupations and walks of life. Seminar sessions will feature assigned readings on leaders and change agents, class discussion on what drives movers and shakers, and individual and group presentations on class members’ emergent leadership perspectives. A key objective of the seminar is the development of critical thinking skills, writing skills, and verbal skills. Consequently, the weekly class readings, reflection papers on class readings, class discussions, class presentations (individual and group), and final project are vital features of the seminar experience. Students will be expected to leave the seminar with a grounded perspective on leaders and leadership, and the ability to articulate their own personal views on making a difference in the world.

FSSO 129. Perspectives on Inequality. 4 Units.
We live in a world in which millions of people die every year in developing countries due to poverty-related conditions. Within the United States, where most commentators characterize the population as "middle class," at least 35 million people live in poverty. This course examines social inequality from multiple perspectives. We will discuss the concepts of poverty, discrimination, and social change on a global and national level. The first third of the course assesses several economic, cultural, and environmental theories of inequality. We will then survey a wide range of scholarship that has addressed various types of social inequalities from diverse viewpoints.

FSSO 143. Living With and Making Decisions Concerning Injustice. 4 Units.
Injustice. What do you think of when you hear that word? There are all types of injustice in this world, and chances are that during our lifetime we will either find ourselves in a position or system of power, perpetrating injustice on others; or in a position or system of supposed impotence, a subject of injustice. What are our choices? How will we respond? In this course we will examine the topic of living with and making decisions concerning injustice using, as an example, the specific injustice of slavery, examining the lives and decisions of both a famous slaveholder and two not-so-famous slaves; and learning from their lives and decisions how we might, ourselves, live with and make decisions concerning injustices we face in our lives.

FSSO 145. Berlin in History, History in Berlin. 4 Units.
From its emergence as a fishing village in the sandy marshes of the eastern frontier of Germany, to its 21st century role as a cosmopolitan metropolis, Berlin has embodied the arc of change over time in human society. This course uses the history of the city of Berlin as the lens through which to contemplate the complexity of human social and cultural arrangements, their expression in economics and politics (including war), and the imbrication of human cultural and social constructions with the "natural" world. We will read books and articles about the history, culture, economy, and politics of Berlin, primarily from its establishment as the capital of new German Empire in 1871 to the present. We will view films that introduce us to the manic energy that Berlin represented in the transition to modernity. We will visit local museums that house examples of the material culture of Berlin, from the Cleveland Museum of Art to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. We will listen to the music of Berlin, from the baroque of the Brandenburg Concertos to the heavy metal of the Skorpions. And we will learn its history, from fishing village, to court city, to imperial metropolis and industrial engine, to divided symbol of the Cold War, to de-industrialized center of art, government, education, and incubator of high-technology. This First Seminar will prepare students to pursue their undergraduate degrees grounded in thinking about places in time, about change over time, and about human creativity, while preparing them to write and speak about their arguments with clarity and grace.
FSSO 146. The Past and Future of Art, Architecture and Museums in Cleveland. 4 Units.
During the gilded age, Cleveland became one of this country’s most powerful centers of business, industry, and political power. For example, John D. Rockefeller, who started his business career in Cleveland, became the wealthiest individual in human history, and Mark Hanna, the leader of Cleveland’s Republican political machine, selected and engineered the election of eight Ohio-born Presidents of the United States, setting a state record which is still unbroken. As late as the 1930s, Henry Luce located the headquarters of Time, Life and Fortune magazines in Cleveland, and the Terminal Tower, the nexus of the vast, sprawling railroad and real- estate Empire of the Van Sweringen Brothers, was the country’s highest building outside of New York. This class will examine one of the by-products of this accumulation of power and money: the flowering of art and culture in Cleveland during the early 20th century, and the creation of notable cultural institutions, such as one of this country’s finest symphony orchestras, one of its top ten art museums, a major university, and an array of other notable entities, many of them housed in buildings of architectural distinction. The class will also examine the economic, cultural and intellectual decline of Cleveland in the second half of the 20th century, and recent attempts to reverse this trend through intensive efforts to revitalize University Circle. In addition to classroom sessions, the course will include field trips to the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Western Reserve Historical Society, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, and an architectural tour of downtown Cleveland. The class will be centered on three interrelated questions: What makes a great city? How can the artistic and cultural life of a great city be developed and sustained? How can the social and economic collapse of a great city be reversed?

FSSO 149. Creativity in the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. 4 Units.
This seminar will have a focus on creativity in the arts, sciences, and engineering. What are the similarities and differences in the creative process in these three different broad fields? How are the creative products different? What are the creative processes involved in these different domains? Are there differences in personalities between scientists and artists? How can we foster creativity in children and adults in these fields? We all read about and discuss the different dimensions of creativity, what makes something creative, what helps people become creative; the role of cognition and emotion in the creative process in the arts and sciences; and mental illness and creativity.

FSSO 152. Decision Making in Everyday Life. 4 Units.
Although social cognition allows us to process vast amounts of information quickly, we are not always aware of the subtle forces that guide our decision making. This course will use a seminar approach to explore rational and irrational forces that influence decision making. We will use a multi-disciplinary approach to decision making, including topics such as personality factors, incentive-based decision making, cognitive biases, automatic information processing, and theories of mind. These topics will be explored using class discussion, writings, and student presentations.

FSSO 153. Reading Social Justice: The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards. 4 Units.
In this seminar, we will read a selection of poetry, short stories and books and use them as a framework to explore questions related to understanding tolerance, social justice and diversity. We will begin by establishing a definition of and methodology for addressing these issues in our discussion and writing, and build upon them as the semester progresses. Much of the fiction and nonfiction we will read will be by winners of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards. In addition to our reading, we will also analyze and discuss a selection of films, art works and music related to our theme. Our Fourth Hour experiences will include attending the Awards ceremony in September, visits to cultural institutions within University Circle, lectures and guest speakers. While the primary goal of the class is to help students develop their critical thinking and writing skills, it is also intended to introduce them to a vital, Cleveland-based literary institution. By engaging the themes, texts, and authors of Anisfield-Wolf, students will have a deeper understanding not only of contemporary literature, but the importance of social justice to a liberal arts education.

FSSO 157. Being in Touch: Animal and Human Considerations. 4 Units.
This is a seminar designed to refine skills of critical thinking and reading, listening, learning, writing and verbal presentation while considering the topic of touch. We will consider touch in different situations and for different purposes - touch in child development, touch in socialization, therapeutic animal touch, touch and violence/harassment, touch in the workplace, touch and technology, taste as a function of touch, healing touch comforting and noxious touch, and things we are afraid to touch.

FSSO 164. Social Change, Genes, and Environment. 4 Units.
This seminar will focus on the rapidly expanding understanding of the interaction of biological and social forces— including the interaction of genes and environment. We will explore claims that are made in science and popular culture about the role of genes in development. We will focus on the role that social forces play in shaping the effects of genes in development, and health, through epigenetics and related mechanisms. Adopting a sociology-of-science perspective, we will consider the wider and future implications of gene-environment interactions for politics, the economy, and culture.

FSSO 165. Identities and Social Inequality. 4 Units.
In this course, students examine diversity, privilege, and power in US society. Social categories such as gender, heritage, language, race, religion, and sexuality affect the status of both individuals and groups, at times producing unequal distribution of resources and marginalization. No group or individual belongs to one category; therefore, we will also consider how the intersection of these categories produces their own unique effects. Students are expected to analyze and critique social institutions, belief systems, and practices that promote inequality and social justice through data-based dialogue and writing. Modes of inquiry will include quantitative and qualitative research methods and current scholarly literature. This course is conducted in a seminar format that requires students to engage in active, relevant and insightful discussions regarding the course content. Students have the opportunity to hear from guest experts in the field and participate in off-campus learning activities. Reflective and scholarly writing are major components of the course.
FSSO 169. The History of Your Lifetime: Making Sense of the Last Twenty Years. 4 Units.
No matter when you grow up, adults make assumptions about what you know. "You lived through certain events, didn’t you? Those events are often very important—the basis of political and policy debates or related to subjects that affect daily life—but it’s often difficult to make sense of history you’ve lived through, but only as children. The usual way we learn about the past—in history classes—isn’t very helpful because this is a time period that usually goes beyond what your teachers have been able to cover. Even if you could have covered this recent time period in history class, unfortunately, most recent subjects haven’t received much attention from historians; the archives aren’t yet available and we lack much critical distance in making judgments about what is significant and what isn’t. We aren’t yet sure which assumed causes of historical change are plausible and which only seemed so at the time. This time period usually constitutes most of the student’s lifetime—your lifetime. This class takes these challenges head-on, examining the last 20 years of history. Aside from covering the "what happened" for several selected topics, we will attempt to go further and explore how historians think about contemporary events, place current events into longer historical contexts, develop skills in media literacy to better evaluate the quality of information we receive, and discuss the uses and misuses of historical analogies in public debate. We will also investigate the importance of structural narrative in making sense of historical events and processes: what questions do we ask of the past and why those questions and not others? Why do our questions about the past change over time? How do present circumstances affect our historical work? When do we draw our chronological boundaries; when do our stories start and when do they end?

FSSO 171. Prediction. 4 Units.
This course is an interdisciplinary examination of predictions about social events, how we make them, why they go wrong, and how we respond. While some things, like election results, are easy to predict, dramatic events like wars, depressions, and stock market crashes are harder to predict. The course will begin with the basic elements of probability theory to lay the groundwork for the class. Then, we will examine the psychological research on the types of errors people are prone to make regarding probability and the consequences of such biases in perception and estimation. The course will then move on to discuss predicting specific social events, such as elections and stock trends, comparing the empirical research to conventional beliefs. Then the course will address the role of scholarly research more generally, and the empirical work discussing how political scientists, economists, and other scholars often fail to predict the most significant and dramatic events because of their cognitive styles, which vary in the degree to which they rely on simplified models. Finally, the course will discuss how people respond when their predictions go wrong, and their basic tendency to rationalize away errors.

FSSO 172. Islam in South Asia. 4 Units.
There are more Muslims in South Asia than in any other region of the world. But within the region, Islam is far from a monolith. What variety of religious practices and traditions of debate have characterized South Asian Muslims? When meshed with different political projects, how do we understand Islam as a deeply contested ideological field? What roles did Muslims play in the history of South Asia? These are some of the questions we will pursue in the seminar. The long history of Muslim presence in the region—which now includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan—will offer opportunities for studying them in a wide range of historical contexts: as actors in cosmopolitan, commercial networks of trade; as rulers consolidating states and empires governing large multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations; as “modernizers” and “traditionalists;” as religious minorities and majorities in different nation-states. Additionally, this seminar will explore Islam in an array of modern settings: from a nation-state created as a “Muslim homeland” to a rejection of religion as an adequate basis of national identity; from democracy to military rule; and, from Cold War politics to the “Global War on Terror.”

FSSO 176. SAVOR: The Ethics and Politics of Eating. 4 Units.
Our food choices affect more than our individual health; what we decide to put into our bodies has important consequences for our environment, the livelihood of farmers, and even the general well-being of a society. These choices also reveal moral, cultural, and religious values we deem important. In this seminar, we will examine the environmental and social consequences of our food choices by interrogating both our individual habits as well as current (often controversial) food policy issues. In line with the requirements of a SAGES First Seminar, this course is designed to improve students’ ability to read critically and interpret moral and political arguments. We will analyze a wide range of writings on food-related issues in order to develop sophisticated perspectives on our food choices. Hopefully, this thoughtful consideration will translate to mindful habits when we convene around food with our friends, families, and communities. Class discussions will be accompanied by class visits to urban gardens, restaurants with a sustainability mission, and farmers’ markets. We’ll also meet representatives of community organizations like the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

FSSO 178. Crafting Your Own Freedom. 4 Units.
An abiding task of ancient philosophy was to style your life with wisdom. The Greek and Roman schools of philosophy so common to cities around the Mediterranean two thousand years ago developed all sorts of techniques for people to become self-styled sages-in-training. The modern variant, as Michael Foucault and his student Jacques Rancière noted, was to transpose wisdom into a critical attitude where the goal of style was not sagacity but liberation. In this course, we work as in a lab—a modern philosophical workplace—to style your lives critically, articulating stratagems and ideals of liberation. In particular, we focus on becoming a multi-dimensional human, on finding time and space in the midst of work for utopian dreams, on loving relationships, and on education as a developmental experience.
FSSO 180. The Tobacco Wars. 4 Units.
If smoking cigarettes is as deadly as the experts say, why does anyone do it? If reducing cigarette consumption is a vital public health goal, does the fact that the rate of smoking by U.S. adults has fallen by two thirds over the past 50 years mean policies have been a great success, or does the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s estimate that about 480,000 Americans suffered premature deaths in 2009 that could be attributed to smoking mean policies have been at best inadequate? Why did the political winds turn against tobacco use and sale in the 1990s? And why do both public health advocates and tobacco companies want to restrict vaping? Those are among the questions we will investigate in this course. It will call on perspectives from, among others, the fields of public health, political science, sociology, and economics. We will begin with readings about the research on tobacco’s physiological effects. Next we will consider tobacco’s attractions—both for individual consumption and as a shared activity. The third section of the course will ask what policies to reduce consumption work, how well, and why. We will then focus on the dramatic political battles of the 1990s. What happened and why? There are many different answers, and that makes the story even more interesting. The final section of the course will focus on current policies and politics, ending with the controversies over e-cigarettes. Why were e-cigarettes included in CWRU’s new anti-smoking policy, and should they have been?

FSSO 181. Bicycles: Technology and Everyday Life. 4 Units.
For most of us, the bicycle seems a simple, everyday object, perhaps associated with children’s toys or recreational sport. But deeper analysis reveals that the technology of the bicycle has developed in distinct social contexts, and that aspects of its development are closely intertwined with community values. In this seminar, we will trace the history of bicycles in these technological and social contexts. We will note, for example, the importance of bicycles for the feminist movement of the 1890s and beyond. We will also consider cycling in our present environment, paying attention to debates about urban infrastructure as it pertains to cars, bicycles, and pedestrians. We will engage with popular and scholarly sources, and we will consider the significance of bicycles even for non-cyclists. Topics may include the physics and engineering of bicycle design, the aesthetic aspects of the cycling experience, the role of bicycles in our transportation infrastructure, and the varying perceptions of cycling in cultures throughout the world. We will critically examine claims that increased bicycle use can lead to better energy efficiency, less traffic, improved health, better quality of life, and more fun. Fourth-hour classes will include connections with community cycling organizations, such as Case Cycling and bike advocacy nonprofits. Students will write formal critical essays, exploring topics from readings and discussion in greater depth. Students need not possess any cycling experience to take this class—only an interest in questions of how technology interacts with social values, and how these values are expressed in our everyday lives. We will use Cleveland and University Circle as a laboratory for understanding the complexity and challenges of managing city infrastructure for different kinds of users. Optional group rides if interest exists.

FSSO 182. Burning River to City Farms: Transitional Urban Environments. 4 Units.
How does one live sustainably in an urban setting? This emerges as a vital 21st century question, especially since more than 70% of contemporary Americans live in or near densely populated cities. This seminar examines how people in urban geographies forge meaningful relations with the natural world. Cleveland, a city undergoing cultural and economic redefinition, stands as an ideal place to engage the work of contemporary environmental writers, filmmakers, urban planners, and community organizers. While our field experiences will ground us in environmental transitions taking place in Cleveland, we will consider how similar dynamics play out in other Midwestern cities as well as further-flung locales, such as Havana, Toronto, New Orleans, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Boston. This seminar’s driving questions include: How have people in urban setting—across lines of social class and ethnicity—forged meaningful relationships with the natural world? How do global histories, carried through immigration and refugee resettlement, affect the ways that current communities interact with urban nature? How might privilege and power factor into the greening of blighted city spaces, through practices such as urban farming, ecological restoration, and community revitalization? Our exploration of these questions will help you form a better understanding of what it means to live mindfully at the intersection of nature and culture.

FSSO 184. Handmaking in the Age of the Machine. 4 Units.
Our seminar will focus on what counts as hand-made in our society, whose hands do the making, and why this making continues to matter. In order to understand that type of making, we’ll investigate the relationship between industry and handicraft, the machine and the human, the mechanically reproduced and the precious original—all expressions of relations among technology, individual bodies, and the imagination. Since the Industrial Revolution, our society has increasingly mechanized its operations to ensure efficient production involving fewer skilled workers. Opposition to industrialization has existed since the earliest moments of the Revolution, expressed both violently by the followers of the mythical Ned Ludd and thoughtfully by people such as Victorian craftsman and philosopher William Morris, who argued for a return to human ingenuity and “handicraft.” Today, craft movements supported by Etsy.com and DIY TV shows like Project Runway continue to inspire ingenuity in both machine and handicraft. To investigate these ideas, we will read texts from philosophers, industrialists, and craftspeople concerned with mass production, experience making things by hand, and travel to local museums and maker-spaces. Among other creative activities, we will use CWRU’s letterpress, make books, learn how to knit, and explore think[box]. Students will pursue a handmade project of their choice.

FSSO 185A. Adulting: Coming of Age in the 21st Century. 4 Units.
This course will explore what it means to grow up today. In industrialized countries 50 years ago, a 22-year-old was married, had at least one child, and was perhaps on the way to owning a home. For the current generation, however, traditional markers of adulthood—leaving home, completing school, becoming financially independent, getting married, and having children—have become increasingly delayed, disordered, or even foregone, both in the US and worldwide. To better understand this shift, we will investigate the changing economic, social, and cultural forces underlying it. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality shape young people’s experiences of, and pathways to, adulthood.
FSSO 185C. Music and Cultural Anxiety in the 20th Century. 4 Units.
The Paris premiere in May 1913 of Igor Stravinsky’s ballet, The Rite of Spring, provoked one of the most infamous crowd reactions in Western music history. The “primitive” choreography and brutally dissonant music scandalized the more conservative attendees, whose protests drowned out the orchestra and threw the dancers into confusion. To its detractors, The Rite of Spring not only threatened the polite domain of classical ballet, it confirmed a view that serious music had gone off the rails and was hastening Europe’s moral and spiritual decline. But The Rite of Spring was also a new beginning, labeled by one prominent historian “the defining moment of Modernism not just in music, but in all the arts.” In this course, Stravinsky’s ballet will provide a starting point for examining cultural anxieties provoked by once-new music, especially with regard to questions of how music relates to identity (social, political, economic, racial/ethnic, sexual, gender). What role does music play in forming, signaling, or challenging popular values or beliefs? What factors explain strong ethical reactions to different kinds of music? How do particular genres tend to reflect social or political status, how are cultural taboos broken through music, and in what ethical terms has musical progress historically been defined? How do we reconcile music we might like with offensive views that its creators might have held? From the early twentieth-century Modernist era, we will proceed to two other disruptive historical moments: the rise of Hitler’s Third Reich and its impact on German music and musicians; and the emergence of rock-n-roll in the 1950s and 60s, which enflamed anxieties about racial, sexual, and generational difference, and provided a soundtrack for unprecedented social upheaval. Seminar discussions will be based on readings and videos that are accessible to non-musicians, and we will also take extracurricular advantage of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Students will help lead class discussions and will write short essays that can be related in unlimited ways to present-day concerns, whether individual or social.

FSSO 185D. Beyond Words: Language, Culture & Society. 4 Units.
Language and communication permeate all aspects of our experience from facial expressions and body language to texting and social media. In this seminar we will engage in the academic and experiential exploration of human languages and communication in connection to a wide range of social practices and cultural meanings. In addition to studying how languages shape human thought, we will investigate linguistic diversity and change both within and across societies and cultures. We will also examine how one’s position in a society with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and age among other dimensions can affect one’s use of language. Over the course of the semester we will learn and apply key concepts, approaches and methods through the discussion of a variety of cases studies and examples. We will also discussed what it takes to achieve linguistic and cultural competency in multicultural settings and situations including various institutions and professional fields.

FSSO 185E. Case Studies in Public Health. 4 Units.
What are the markers of a “healthy” society, and who decides? What should be the government’s role in preserving and protecting our bodies, minds, and communities? Does collective welfare trump the rights of the individual? How the state responds to an ailing citizenry tells us a lot about both how it understands health and whose health it deems valuable. This course uses three case studies from U.S. history to illustrate the principles and the practical realities of public-health crisis management. For their final project, students will research a case study of their own choosing and present it as a podcast.

FSSO 185J. Democracy vs Populism in the 21st Century. 4 Units.
A worrying trend seems afoot. Recent studies indicate a persistent global pattern: declining support for representative democratic institutions. This fall is starker among people under the age of 30. Only a third of individuals in this age group believe it is important to live in a democracy. Generally, there appears a marked preference for forms of direct democracy such as referenda or for rule by figures not associated with traditional forms of democratic government such as military or business leaders. Populism—whether on the political right or left—has grown in support across the globe since the 2008 financial crisis. Twenty-first century populism aims to prevent a so-called corrupt elite from thwarting the will of the people. Populists can express inclusive democratic ideals, but can just as easily build a majority by discriminating on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, religion, class, or immigration. Recent political movements in the UK and USA, for example, reflect populist sentiment, while the rise of authoritarianism in Hungary, Russia, and Turkey also depends upon populist appeal. This course considers the implication of these events for democracy. We will ask whether democracy really is in crisis or whether the current uncertainty is a foreseeable consequence of cultural, economic, and social change.

FSSO 185L. What is College For?. 4 Units.
Why are we here? Not on this planet—that’s another course—but here, at this university? What is the purpose of a university? What do we—as students, as faculty, as different communities—expect of such an institution? And what should those institutions expect from us? In this course we will explore historical and contemporary ideas of the university, and in our seminar discussions we will measure our own experiences against that history and those theories. We will place particular emphasis on the current state of the idea of the university, and the subsequent effects of those ideas on current university students. We will ask, for example, how cultural and societal notions of the university’s purpose affect our expectations for our own time and work there. How and why do debates about the university present a stage for some of our most contentious societal questions? We will acquaint ourselves with the histories and contexts of some of these debates in order to address the complexities of our present moment. We will take up this debate ourselves in our daily seminar conversations, and we will explore them further in Fourth Hour field trips around our university and others in the Cleveland area. We will write and think in a variety of genres, including personal essays, critical analyses, and individual and group oral presentations.
FSSO 185N. Religion in the City: Skyscrapers, Hip-Hop, and Urban Spirituality. 4 Units.
I’ll bet that “religion” isn’t the first word that comes to mind when you think of LeBron James, Cardi B, Kim Kardashian, or Kanye West. And yet these icons of pop culture embody an urban spirituality infused with elements from American evangelicalism, modern capitalism, and the Latinx and African diasporas. This course examines the social and spiritual reconfigurations that have accompanied globalization and urbanization in the 20th- and 21st-Century United States. Our focus is on the dynamic relationship between faith and place, and especially the ways that migration and urban development have reshaped the American religious landscape. The class is divided into three thematic areas, each of which is accompanied by a corresponding textbook and culminates in a graded writing assignment. (i) We will begin the class with a quick overview of contemporary American religious history, paying specific attention to several religious and cultural institutions in Cleveland. (ii) Equipped with these local case studies, we will zoom out, historically, to consider broader trends in other periods and regions of the United States. (iii) To conclude the semester, we will bring these anthropological and historical backdrops to bear on the role of urban religion in contemporary hip-hop, basketball, and political discourse.

FSSO 185O. Illusions and Confusions: The Cognitive Science of Mistakes. 4 Units.
Much of what we know about how minds work comes from observations about the kinds of mistakes we make. Perceptual illusions reveal things about how our brains process sensory information. Magic tricks teach us about the nature of attention. These sorts of illusions raise questions about why and how we become confused. Why do puzzles seem easier when we know the answer? Why do rare events often seem scarier than everyday dangers? Why is it harder to say whether a word is red or green when that word is YELLOW than when it is BUCKET? In this course we will explore these effects and others to learn not only about cognition but also about the practice of cognitive science–how we can study questions about the human mind by finding and testing this kind of evidence. We will read about famous conceptual and perceptual illusions and confusions; we will learn how to demonstrate them and try them for ourselves; and we will practice describing and discussing these effects in writing and in short formal presentations. Finally, we will also explore how you can learn most effectively from your own mistakes, both as you study and in your creative life.

FSSO 185P. Caskets and Corpses: The American Funeral Industry. 4 Units.
What do you want to happen to your body when you die? In the United States, you can be embalmed and buried in a public cemetery, donated to science, or composted. If you prefer cremation, your ashes can be placed in an urn, added to a coral reef, or pressed into a diamond. Despite this seemingly endless array of options, however, the vast majority of corpses in America have one thing in common: they are processed through the funeral industry, which generates $16 billion a year in revenue. But this is a rather modern development: it was not until the late 1800s that the funeral industry started to replace traditional forms of death care, in which families prepared the body at home before burial in the local churchyard. How and why did this change occur? How did the industry become so powerful and so profitable? How has it been able to withstand critics’ accusations that funeral directors exploit the bereaved, favoring profit over people? In a nation that embraces individuality, why do most Americans end up at the funeral home? In this seminar, we will examine the origins, evolution, and growth of the American funeral industry, as well as explore some emerging alternatives to its traditional practices to learn how Americans are beginning to use the power of consumer choice to regain control over the business of death.

FSSO 185R. America’s Business. 4 Units.
This seminar is concerned with the nature, rationale, and consequences of America’s business philosophies and practices as they influence Americans and the world at large. The starting point for our inquiry will be a famous phrase spoken by President Calvin Coolidge in 1925: “the chief business of the American people is business.” By this Coolidge meant that Americans were generally motivated by commercial activities like producing, buying, selling, and investing. But he also explained that they were guided by certain ideals: industry, ambition, integrity, and a desire for progress and collective benefit. Taking Coolidge’s statement as our starting point, in this seminar we will examine a series of vignettes of American business practices and their consequences, both positive and, occasionally, not so positive. Is Coolidge’s assessment still accurate? Are Americans chiefly motivated by business? Are they guided by the principles he identified? These questions are particularly relevant in two ways. First, recently there has been rising discontent about, and vigorous challenges of, American business and the economic and social conditions it has created, such as increased economic inequality, decreased socioeconomic class mobility, a culture cheapened by crass materialism, and a rapidly deteriorating environment. Second, these concerns and critiques are not limited to US business. To the extent that American business practices and philosophies influence economies around the world, we might modify Coolidge’s dictum to state that the chief business of the world’s people is American business (or at least, American-style business). Given the influence of American business, both domestically and internationally, it is more important than ever to examine critically the extent to which American business is–or is not–fulfilling its ideals.

FSSO 185T. Homelessness in the United States of America. 4 Units.
Despite some positive signs over the past decade, homelessness in the United States remains incredibly high and recently shows signs of worsening. According to the most reliable government report, on a single night in January 2018, 553,000 people were found not to have a safe, permanent place to sleep. When we consider the turnover in the population of people who experience homelessness for at least a few nights during the course of a year, this number could be significantly higher. What causes homelessness? What is the experience of those without a home? And what steps can be taken to address meeting this basic need? In this seminar, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the intersection of health and housing in order to better understand the phenomenon of homelessness and the people it affects. Using unstructured observations and community assessment approaches, we will consider personal and societal values, ethical dilemmas, and the meaning of “home.” We will examine historical, socio-political, and socio-economic factors that shape the lived experience of individuals and families without a permanent home. At the same time, we will study the common and divergent experiences of subgroups within the homeless population. Finally, we will assess the successes and limitations of various interventions and policy responses intended to address the homelessness problem.
**FSSO 185U. Women and Leadership. 4 Units.**
Across many fields—from the Women's March demonstrations, to women in sports, science, film, and more—women are becoming visible, powerful leaders as they develop new practices for what it means to lead. The 2016 presidential election and the 2018 midterm election highlighted women's leadership as a key issue in democracy and politics today. In this seminar, we will explore critically the social construction of gender and leadership identities, including feminist leadership. We will examine social problems related to gender and leadership in the arts, politics, business, and society broadly. We will meet many women leaders throughout Northeast Ohio to understand their paths to leadership and success. In addition, since women cannot be viewed as a monolith, we will take an intersectional approach to understanding leadership identity and pay attention to gender, race, nationality, class, and sexuality. Regardless of your own gender identity, by analyzing historical and political leadership narratives in this class you will foster your own sense of gender consciousness. You will sharpen your ability to apply gender and race as categories of critical analysis. By writing your own leadership narrative, you will develop your own explanation for what it means to be a leader.

**FSSO 186B. Decolonization. 4 Units.**
Decolonization is the process of returning sovereignty to societies that have been colonized. In addressing the colonial world order created by European nations, decolonization became an explicit focus of international politics by the mid-20th century, long after the American Revolution. Today, it remains potent concerning the remaining nations of the world, including the United States of America, that are considered settler colonial, i.e., where the colonizers live on the land that they have taken, rather than merely extracting resources from it for a home society abroad. Decolonization is more than a matter of sovereignty. It involves creating alternatives for the cultural systems that normalize colonization. This practice of cultural critique is called "decoloniality." It aims at beginning, carrying through, and closing out decolonization through mental and cultural change. The course blends history, political science, cultural studies, and philosophy. Students learn about the history of decolonization, examples of current struggles against settler colonization, and the discourse of decoloniality, engaging in what is called "decolonial thought." They achieve a grasp of the history of decolonization struggles, awareness of the complexities of decolonization past and present, and comfort with the complex discourse of decoloniality. Students develop their philosophical outlook on decolonization today.

**FSSO 186D. Arts, Culture and the City. The Local and Global in Cleveland, Ohio. 4 Units.**
The words "Arts and Culture" frequently appear in conversations about how to improve city life. They are seen as ways to cultivate community, social connection, equity, democracy, and education. And yet, unlike other services such as water and parks, which are often managed through centralized city-funded departments, the arts in most cities rely on a loosely organized network of public and private entities including schools, museums, philanthropies, corporations, small businesses, neighborhoods and individuals. These entities sometimes have very different definitions of the arts, why they are important, who they serve and how they should contribute to the organism of the city. Such differences can lead to disparate and conflicting ideas about how the needs of the city ought to be assessed and addressed. In this seminar, we will investigate the various players that constitute, promote, and define arts and culture in greater Cleveland, ranging from neighborhood nonprofits and businesses to powerful regional institutions with multi-million-dollar endowments. As home to one of the centers for African-American theater in the United States, one of the largest public libraries in the United States and one of the most visited art museums in the world, the local attention to Cleveland resonates with much larger questions about arts, culture and the city. How do stakeholders define their agendas in relation to both the local and global nature of the city? Are the arts conceptualized from top-down perspectives, bottom-up perspectives or somewhere in between? How do the fractures of contemporary life appear in art contexts seeking to create connections and a vibrant public life? Through an exploration of these questions related to the arts, we will gain a better understanding of the forces – both near and far – that shape cities.