



FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

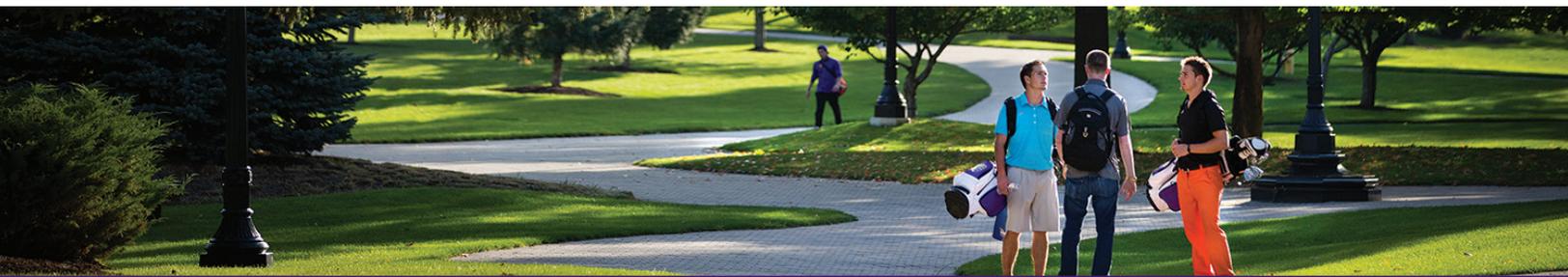
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
2022 - 2023 Academic Year

First Year Seminar is the foundational course in the liberal arts and sciences for entering first-years at Elmira College. Offered in the fall term, it serves as a gateway to the College's General Education program and introduces students to the wider world of learning beyond the professional training of their declared majors. One of the main goals of the program is to develop intellectual skills that will be helpful to students throughout their college career and beyond. In particular, the seminar focuses on sharpening students' skills in critical thinking and reading. Students have the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of exciting seminar topics, ranging from the natural sciences and the humanities, to the fine arts and the social sciences. In each case, the professor draws on her or his special expertise and interests to provide a unique learning experience.

LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND FYS

Living Learning Communities (LLCs) are small groups of first-year students who live in the same residence hall and take two courses together: First Year Seminar in the fall and Foundations of Academic Writing in the winter. Students are also encouraged to participate in events together, such as attending Eagle Engagement Series events and completing their First Year, First Service event together. Joining an LLC is an optional opportunity that allows students to form close bonds with their classmates, develop study skills together, and connect with the Elmira community in a more intimate way.

For the 2022-2023 school year, Elmira will offer three LLCs with the following themes: Environmental Sustainability, Social Justice, and Healthy Living. You do not need to be in a specific major to join a learning community--you just need to be interested in the theme and excited to participate in community activities!



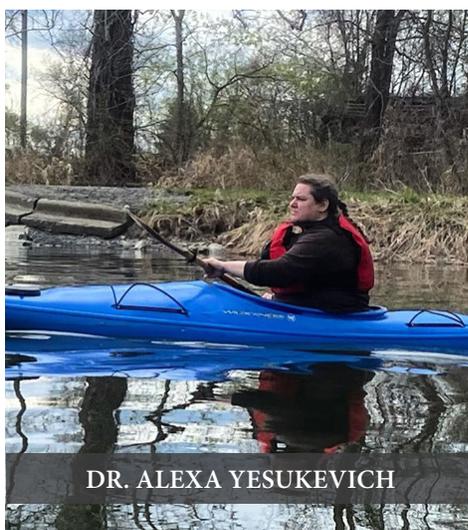
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Our time together will be grounded in our community garden, which we'll use to explore our own relationships with nature and agriculture. We will try out some small, rewarding shifts in daily routines that can benefit the environment and connect us to the natural world. From there we will shift to examine the policies and economic structures that fundamentally determine the future path of environmental sustainability.

We will study the complicated relationship between capitalism and the environment. We'll look for ways to balance attention to our personal contributions to a sustainable future with attention to systemic changes.

Students should expect to do a considerable amount of hands-on learning through field trips, possible meetings with local environmental advocates, and of course ongoing work in our garden.



DR. ALEXA YESUKEVICH

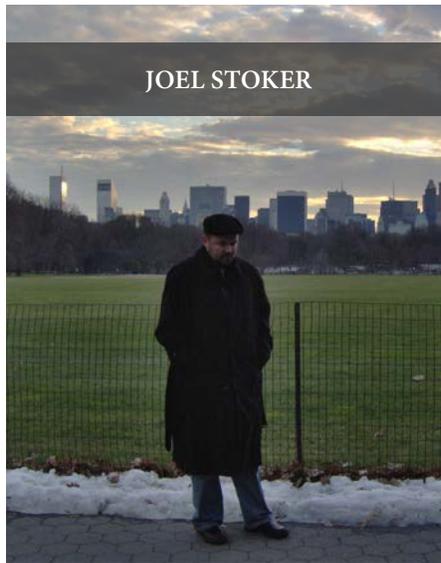
I teach sociology and gender studies. Before coming to Elmira College I studied political thought at Mount Holyoke and Brandeis, and then earned a doctorate in sociology from Cornell. I am a cultural sociologist, which means that I'm interested in the often-invisible value systems that lie underneath our everyday behaviors. I currently investigate these value systems through historical research and through classes like Media and Society, Community Organization, and this sustainability-themed FYS.

SOCIAL JUSTICE LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

TOWARD A MORE JUST WORLD

Many of us ask: What can I do to make the world a more equitable place? At the heart of this question is the barrier that prevents the world from being equal: injustice. Making the world more just seems like a daunting task. Yet history teaches us that it is possible and the tools have been laid out before us. How many of our real-world heroes have given power to the powerless, voices to the voiceless, hope to the downtrodden, and opportunities for advancement inspires all of us to make the world a better place.

From reformations in the criminal justice system to religion's impact in the Civil Rights Movement, in this course students investigate historical policies of institutional discrimination and the social disparities of a modern, pluralistic world. Incorporating both factual and fictional narratives into the scope of reading for the course, students will also understand the methods used by educators, artists, religious leaders, and activists to shift power centers and empower minorities and the underprivileged. Students will observe and participate in a local social justice organization by collaborating with leaders from local organizations of their choice to explore and influence the community. The course concludes with students' reports and presentations on their research, observations, and participation in the course projects.



PROFESSOR JOEL STOKER

I began my college experience rapidly changing my major as my interests shifted: Chemistry to Biology, then French to Psychology. I finally ended up majoring in Religious Studies and continued with it through my PhD program. My early interests studying Native American and polygamist communities of the American Southwest expanded to include the social aspects of many lived religions across the globe. Due to the transdisciplinary nature of the academic study of religion, I work with not only religious concepts, but philosophical, sociological, and anthropological ideas as well. Recently, I have conducted research on the emergence of hybrid religious identities, abolitionist movements, the changing roles for women in religious communities, and multicultural and pluralistic ideologies here and abroad. I thoroughly enjoy researching the cultural history and community engagement that this region provides, and I have relished the opportunity to work with many local community organizations that try to improve the local community, the nation, and the world.

HEALTHY LIVING L.L.C.

HEALTHY BODY AND MIND

This course will focus on students learning positive habits to promote a healthy body and mind as they transition into their college environment. Students will gain an understanding of the emotional, intellectual, social, environmental and physical elements of wellness while learning and practicing positive skills to combat everyday stress and develop long term resiliency. Students will be provided opportunities to practice their skills, experience guest lectures, participate in community events and opportunities. This experience will allow students to connect with one another to forge positive, support relationships with their classmates and larger campus community.



PROFESSOR KELLY SMITH

I am an Assistant Professor of Human Services at Elmira College. I have a Master's in Social Work and am currently studying for my doctoral degree in social work.

My research interests include isolation and loneliness issues as well the life experience of Generation Z. Prior to joining Elmira College, I practiced for several years as a therapist working with individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. In that role I enjoyed working with individuals to help them develop positive coping skills, create and set goals for themselves and navigate the bumps in the road of life. I grew up not far from Elmira in Northeastern Pennsylvania where I continue to reside with my family. I am a huge outdoors person. I love to kayak, hike and take walks with my children and dogs.

My two favorite places in the world are Fenway Park in Boston and a quiet morning on the beach. If you see me on campus and like baseball, feel free to stop and talk!

TRUE CRIME AND ME

Why are we so fascinated with stories of crime? What kinds of crime stories capture our attention as a society, and what does that tell us about our social values? How has “true crime” evolved as a genre along with different kinds of media technology? How do our senses of community, self, and other get formed, challenged, or circulated through popular representations of crime in the media? How can we become better critical thinkers about how media representations relate to social and cultural practices? This section of FYS considers the social and cultural implications of representations of crime in popular media, including journalism, docuseries, and podcasts.

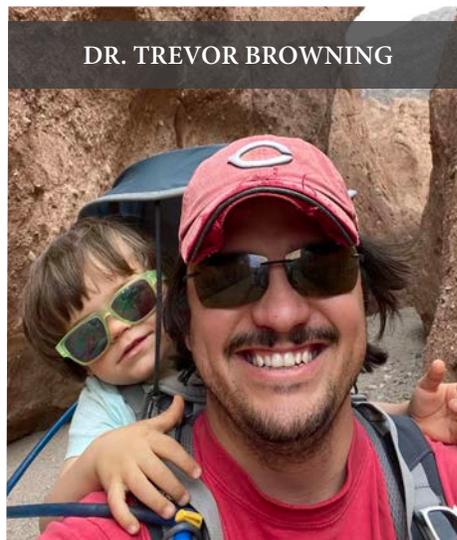


DR. ANNALIESE HOEHLING

I am Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Academic Program at Elmira College. In addition to teaching first-year writing, I specialize in 20th and 21st century literature and culture. I believe that what makes humans “human” is our capacity - and need - for creating and sharing narratives. It’s how we understand our world, each other, and ourselves. In addition to my PhD in literature, I have an MFA in literary translation, and I’ve published both scholarly and literary works. I’m totally a dog person, love talking baseball, and I can’t wait to meet the Class of ‘26.

HIKING WITH A GEOLOGIST

Love a hike in the woods? Over the years, humans have profoundly stated our love for being outside and enjoying the wilderness that surrounds us. We will read some of these accounts from Henry David Thoreau to Annie Dillard, to experience the romantic, environmental, and meditative aspects of nature as we walk about in it. But also, how did the woods and mountains get here in the first place? Humans often overlook the geologic controls of our natural environment. Geology creates the physical landscape we exist on but also subtly molds Earth’s water and climate, influencing the distribution of plants and animals. In this course, we will walk and explore the Southern Tier of New York as we meld a soulful wilderness experience with the science of how and why that wilderness exists. Fortunately, we are surrounded by beautiful wilderness and geology. Elmira is situated on the Allegheny Plateau, bordered by the beautiful, glacially carved Finger Lakes to the north, the Pennsylvania Fold Belt to the south, and the Appalachian Mountains to the East. Bring your boots and come outside to explore with us!



DR. TREVOR BROWNING

I love getting out in nature and trying to understand the physical factors that drive change within it. As a kid, I always wanted to understand how things worked and I now apply that to the natural world. Did I mention I’m the Environmental Science professor at Elmira College? However, I also place a high value on existing in nature, how do we connect with nature spiritually? Before becoming a professor, I worked in the field for private firms and the US Geological Survey from Illinois to Long Island, Texas to Florida, and on the water up and down the east coast. This brought me to many beautiful (and some not-so) places where I genuinely enjoyed my time outdoors. I have always enjoyed merging spirituality and a scientific understanding of nature. Side note: after

dragging my kids through month-long cross-country road trips over the past three summers, I am decidedly proficient at getting as excited about natural features as my kids do when they get their hands on chocolate. I am excited to explore the Southern Tier with you all in a similar manner though hopefully with a lot less dragging/carrying. More terrible jokes to follow...



ANIMATING THE WORLD OF MYTH

Voices of the past speak to us through myths and folklore. These ancient stories, passed down through generations, describe worldviews and offer wisdom for people from every part of the world. This class will explore and compare the traditional stories of cultures from around the world as they are retold by modern storytellers and artists, with an emphasis on foreign films, animations, paintings, sculptures, and other modes of artistic interpretation. Students will respond through analytical writing and creative projects.



AARON KATHER

PROFESSOR AARON KATHER

Born in Elmira and educated in Elmira Heights, I have always called this area home. Since childhood, I have loved stories, film, and the visual arts, and I am excited to be able to combine those passions in this FYS class. I am an insatiably curious person, and I was equally interested in all of my school subjects as a child. Eventually, I gravitated towards the areas that I found to be the most fun and meaningful. I first received my bachelors degree in Anthropology from SUNY Geneseo, where I participated in an archeological field school, and learned about cultures from all over the world. After college, I went on to earn my MFA in Studio Art at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where my notions of what art can be and what art can mean expanded greatly. After graduate school, I returned to Elmira to teach drawing and painting. I continue to love learning about and trying to understand whatever I come across in life.

SECRET CODES, HIDDEN FIGURES, AND MODERN MOVIES

Come experience the fun of creating your own secret codes and secret societies while attempting to decode the secret messages of your friends! In this course, we'll learn about how human history has been shaped by the making and breaking of codes, as well as other related advances in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Throughout the term, we'll watch and discuss modern movies that highlight the people behind groundbreaking discoveries in STEM, both historical and fictional. Watching these movies will lead to important discussions about whose stories get told through popular film. Whose achievements have we traditionally celebrated? Who are the "hidden figures" that we are now beginning to celebrate? Why does representation matter?



DR. ADAM GIAMBRONE

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I grew up in Western Upstate New York, went to middle and high school in Eastern Upstate New York, and went to a small college in Central Upstate New York. In college, I majored in math and physics, but also minored in music and played in a classical guitar quartet. #LiberalArts. I ended up getting my PhD in an area of mathematics called knot theory that is very visual and has some cool applications in the sciences. I think I ended up studying a visual area of mathematics due to my taking a few studio art and drawing courses in high school. #LiberalArts. Outside of academics, I'm a big fan of binge-watching TV and movies. Putting this all together, I'm interested in mathematics, its connections to social and political issues, and how math is portrayed in movies and on TV.



IMAGINARY CITIES

What are cities, exactly, and why do they exist? How are cities shaped by human norms, values, beliefs, and biases, and how do cities in turn shape the way we experience the world, the relationships we form, and the lives we are able to live? In other words: while we create cities, cities also create us. We will begin by learning about the historical and psychological dimensions of urban design, then set out to explore Elmira and interpret what we find through perception maps, creative writing, and photo essays. We will then dive into films and short stories about utopian and dystopian cities, and study efforts by intentional communities—ecovillages, communes, and coops—to create better microsocieties. Finally, in teams, you will design your own “perfect city” and present it as a diorama in the medium of your choice: Playdoh? Cardboard? Something else? You will also create a compelling advertisement to sell your city to prospective residents.



AUTUMN WATTS

PROFESSOR AUTUMN WATTS

I grew up on the edge of a dry lake in rural Nevada, and have since lived in Oregon, New York, Qatar, and Turkey. While I began by studying cultural anthropology in college, I finished with an MFA in fiction: two loves that marry in my passion for folktales. I've published fiction and essays in Words Without Borders, Guernica, Indiana Review, and Desert Voices, among others, and have mentored a number of student-led research grants in the Arabian Gulf. Besides teaching writing at EC, I'm the fiction editor for Guernica Magazine, and a mom of two charming little kiddos who are usually running around feral somewhere on campus and if you happen to bump into them, would love to say hi to you.

MASHUPS & OTHER COLLISIONS IN ART & LITERATURE

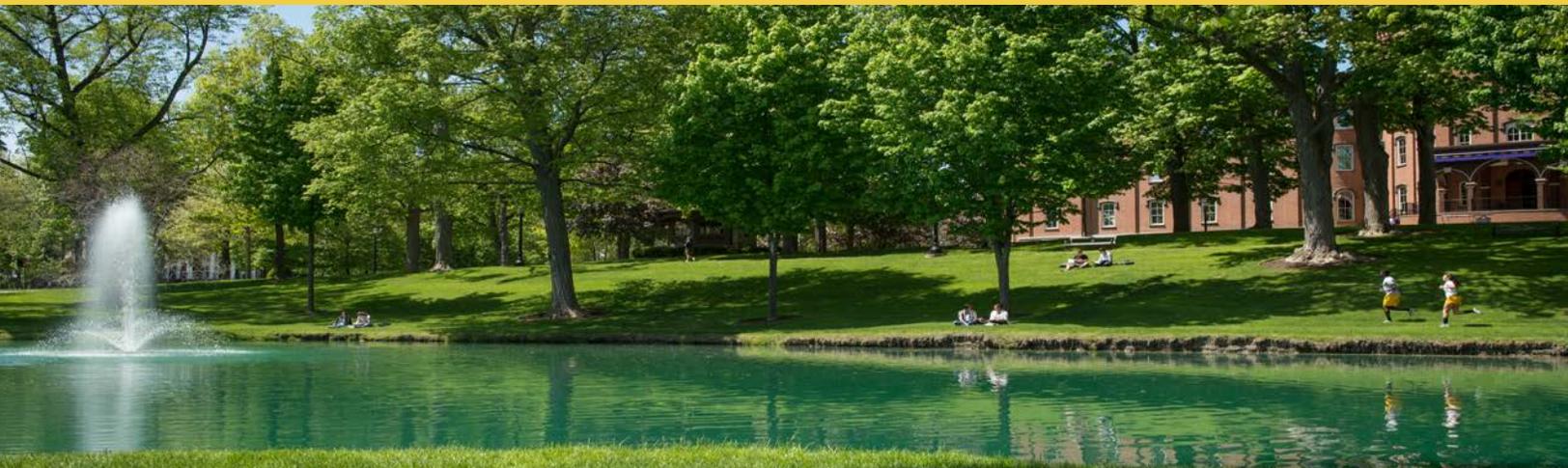
This course examines the conflicts created as a result of discrimination by race, gender, religion, and cultural identity as described in both literature and the arts. Students will be expected to participate in creative projects (mash-up collage, graphic novel, video, photography, music, poetry, dance, reader's theatre, etc.) that will accompany their essays. Selections of coursework will be chosen to form a collaborative class book.



JAN KATHER

PROFESSOR JAN KATHER

In addition to the First Year Seminar, I regularly teach media based courses for the Arts & Humanities Division: Photography, Video Art, Electronic Art Studio, Crafting the Vision, and Digital Studio: Art without Borders. As a founding mother of Elmira College's Women's and Gender Studies Program, I teach through lenses of gender, race, and identity awareness. Having been part of the Center for Mark Twain Studies since 1983, I incorporate selections from Mark Twain's literature as part of FYS readings. Please visit my website (<http://jankatherphotography.com/index.html>) to view my artwork as well as artwork created by Elmira College students.



ART, DESIGN, AND ECOLOGY

Never before have ecological issues been more pressing and creative solutions needed. In this course, students develop a broad understanding of those ecological issues and their relationship to the social, political, cultural, and economic systems that impact the future of humanity, other species, and our shared planet. Students will understand how their own work as an individual, an artist or a designer can comment on, interact with, and impact the world. In this course, we will explore artistic responses to environmental sustainability and related social issues. Students develop collaborative and creative individual projects that may take the form of social/relational art practice, video, installation, performance, writing, sound, 2D or 3D forms, and electronic media. We will focus on artists, designers and architects that work across disciplines and within communities to focus attention on the web of interrelationships in our environment – to the physical, biological, cultural, political and historical aspects of ecological systems. We will re-envision ecological relationships, creatively proposing new possibilities for co-existence, sustainability, and healing. This course will help us understand the connections between political, economic, social, and cultural issues and your own creative practice. Together, we will investigate the complex global issue of climate change. Ultimately, we will consider how artists and designers respond to environmental justice as well as equity and the environment.



DEREK CHALFANT

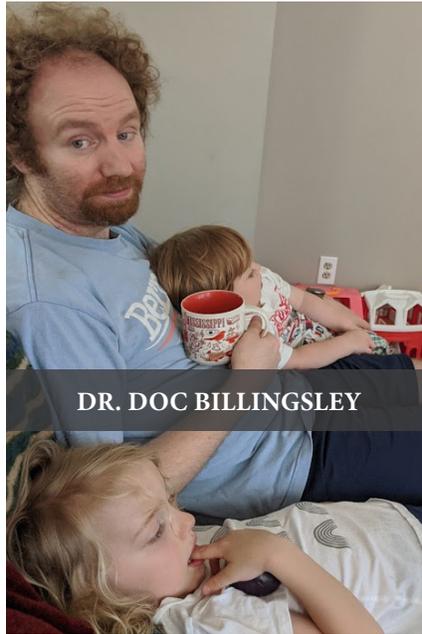
PROFESSOR DEREK CHALFANT

From casting molten metal in junior high school to carving limestone in high school in Southern Indiana, I have long been involved in artistic and creative processes. I earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Indiana University and my Master of Fine Arts degree from The University of Notre Dame. I am an artist and designer and spend much of my time creating sculptures and furniture in a variety of mediums. I teach a broad range of courses at Elmira College including Contemporary Art History, Bronze Casting, First Year Seminar, and all levels of Furniture Design and all levels of Sculpture. As an actively producing artist and designer my work is in public and private collections around the US. I have received grants, awards and scholarships for my creative work. This art and design work has been included in national and international public art exhibitions, and in international publications as well. I have received many important commissions, including liturgical furniture at the University of Michigan, University of Notre Dame, and in the newly renovated Cowles Hall on the campus of Elmira College. Most recently I was awarded a commission for a life-size bronze sculpture of American author EL Doctorow. I am also the recipient of two excellence in teaching awards, the John A. Kaneb Award in 2003 (University of Notre Dame) and the Josef Stein Award (Elmira College) in 2008. It is my desire for my sculptural work to be thought provoking as I attempt to create a richness of meaning with the ambiguities, enigmas, multiple layers and connotations of both form and content. In my research and art I hope to engage and reflect my questions and interests related to the human spirit and sensitivity toward all life forms.



EXPLORING ELMIRA COMMUNITIES

What does it mean to join a new community? What does the residential college experience mean? What are the liberal arts? This course examines the hidden curriculum and helps students find (and create) their own communities within Elmira College and the surrounding area. Borrowing from the ethnographic methods of anthropology, we will explore the rituals that humans use to build communities, examine the role that college plays in personal growth and career preparation, and reflect on the experiences and relationships that shape our understanding of the world. We will discuss strategies for making the best use of the unique opportunities available during and after college, and develop plans for meeting the challenges that we are likely to face along the way. One of the most important benefits of a college education is the opportunity to learn to see the world from other points of view, and to learn more about ourselves in the process. Come explore Elmira College, find your communities, and discover who you are!



DR. DOC BILLINGSLEY

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I'm a cultural anthropologist with a Ph.D. in anthropology from Washington University in St. Louis. My research, based in the highlands of Guatemala, investigated the effects of new Mayan literacy practices on popular conceptions of history and identity. I'm especially interested in historical memory activism, the movements for bringing war criminals to trial, and the ways in which younger generations of Guatemalans have become invested in social justice and confronting the difficult past, despite the lack of formal history education in schools. Through sharing the results of my dissertation research, I hope to demonstrate some of the unique strengths of ethnography for studying collective memory. At Elmira College, I teach classes about cultural and medical anthropology, magic, food, technology, sexuality, race, and Latin America, among other things. I am also director of the Sustainability minor, a husband and father, and a first-generation college graduate.

