

New England College Liberal Core Curriculum

The Liberal Core Curriculum (LCC) at New England College is the nucleus of our liberal arts general education program; which, in combination with their major, earns undergraduates a bachelor's degree. These seminars provide a shared educational experience that fosters an enduring collective identity while giving all undergraduates the opportunity to explore topics of interest outside their majors. Rooted in the liberal arts and sciences, the core curriculum is based on the principle that college graduates, to succeed in life (to be prepared for its challenges and thrive), need exposure to the diversity and breadth of human knowledge and inquiry beyond their area of specialization. Successful completion of the LCC program contributes to our students becoming well-rounded, well-educated, and well-informed in the various disciplines that comprise the liberal arts. Significantly, throughout the core program students will have multiple opportunities to reflect on some of the most critical and ethical issues of our time. To this end, the overarching theme of the LCC program—"On Being Human"—represents the commitment of the liberal arts to question and affirm what it means to be human and to partake in the human condition in responsible, ethical ways.

Requirements:

In addition to two first-year writing courses, and a math course, to satisfy the requirements of the LCC, students will take, seven seminars, (LAS 1-7), spanning the liberal arts and sciences. In principle, these seminars are taken in ascending order, beginning with Liberal Arts Seminar 1, (LAS 1), and concluding with Liberal Arts Seminar 7, (LAS 7). Each of the 7 Seminars has a focus relating to the overarching theme, "*On Being Human*," and every academic discipline offers courses that fulfill requirements in the Core Curriculum. To ensure exposure to the various disciplines, the Liberal Core Curriculum requires all students to take no more than two LAS seminars within their major, excluding LAS 7.

Core Seminars:

LAS 1 and 2 provide the foundation for the Liberal Core Curriculum. These two seminars are designed to introduce students to the meaning and purpose of an education rooted in the liberal arts and sciences by presenting the fundamental question that reverberates throughout the program's curriculum, "What does it mean to be human?"

Ideally taken in the first semester, LAS 1 introduces the overarching theme "On Being Human". Regardless of instructor or disciplinary focus, each LAS 1 seminar prompts students to think about what it means to be human, individually and collectively. Students will consider what our shared obligations and responsibilities are as human beings, despite differences in race, class, gender, ethnicity, or other factors.

Moving from the question of a shared humanity, LAS 2 seminars, ideally taken in the second semester, will address human nature in context. Students will ask, what constitutes community and how can diverse communities coexist in a pluralistic world? In addition, the seminar allows for consideration of the role of the 'outsider' or 'other' within communities and society as a whole. With a focus on American culture these seminars will explore how different communities can both succeed within and challenge the principles of democratic society. From the meaning of social identity and difference to the significance of political, professional and religious affiliations, to the facts of disability, discrimination, and prejudice, these seminars will look at the social construction of difference and the challenges and opportunities of diversity.

LAS 3 covers the Creative Arts, exposing students to the innovative, imaginative side of human experience; these seminars are experientially based, promoting individual creativity, aesthetic awareness, and artistic appreciation.

LAS 4 shifts the focus from a qualitative appreciation of creative art to quantitative reasoning and the Scientific Process. It promotes critical thinking and knowledge through scientific investigation and exploration.

LAS 5, is a Laboratory Science seminar designed to expose students to laboratory investigation and experimentation, asking them to apply the scientific process to a specific field of study.

LAS 6 broadens the scope of inquiry with its focus on the Humanities. It bolsters students' analytical and critical thinking skills, while cultivating an appreciation of beauty and elegance in the search for truth. Specifically, it entails study in the academic disciplines relating to the human condition, including (but not limited to) literature, philosophy, the fine arts, the performing arts, art history, history, and religion.

Finally,

LAS 7 is the final Seminar in the Liberal Core Curriculum, with a focus on Global Perspectives. It is the culminating course within the LCC program, building off all previous LAS seminars, and one that will involve high levels of critical thinking. By addressing global issues that impact the human race and the biotic community of which we are a part, student awareness and critical skills will be heightened in the interest of finding answers to global challenges, and inspiring further inquiry. Ultimately, the purpose of LAS 7, in combination with all previously taken LAS seminars, is for students to engage multiple perspectives in their quest to understand and define what it means to be human, both individually and collectively, in order that they may demonstrate, in whatever field they pursue, an open-minded, well-informed critical, creative, and ethical perspective - one capable of transforming themselves and others for the greater good as they go on to become citizens of the world.

LAS 1

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

LAS 1110 – ON BEING HUMAN

American Theatre on Film

This is a study of what it means to be human through the arts, specifically through film and theatre. We will start with a film called *The Cradle Will Rock*, which will establish some course themes. Then we will watch a documentary on human evolution, followed by a film version of the play *Inherit the Wind*. A documentary on the founding of civilization will be followed by a film version of the play *Insignificance*. Subsequent works will include such films as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Death of a Salesman*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *I Never Sang for My Father*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Dutchman*, *A Trip to Bountiful*, and *The Children's Hour*; we shall conclude with *All That Jazz*.

At the Borders of the Human

When we think about animals, we think about animals other than ourselves because, for most of us, the word animal points to non-human beings, so we often forget that humans, too, are animals. Beyond their usefulness and companionship, what can animals tell us about ourselves? Just how definite is the line that we assume separates us from animal and them from us? Working with indigenous traditions, scientific research, philosophic, religious and cultural theories and assumptions, we will explore the boundary between the human and non-human animal in order to better understand why these relationships can tell us a good deal about ourselves and help us reflect upon our own humanity.

Creativity and Being Human

In recognition of literature's role in psychological discovery, Sigmund Freud once wrote. "*Not I, but the poets discovered the unconscious.*" Stories, poems, and plays have long been our way into the human mind, just as they have shaped the human mind, projecting infinite possibilities for what human thought may be, what feelings are, and as a result, what it means to be human. The focus of this course will be on the many ways in which stories, plays, poems, and songs come into being as an extension of the human mind and how they helped to shape human consciousness, and the conception of humanness itself. We will study various examples of the writing of the mind, and through our discoveries we will investigate the implications of being human. Stream of Consciousness, the Shakespearean soliloquy, Confessional poetry, and personal journals are possible texts.

The Design Impulse

In this course, students will investigate the practice and theory of design as the foundation for all human endeavors. Anytime someone attempts to improve a thing, a situation, or their environment they are engaged in the practice of design. This urge for improvement, to envision and implement increasingly better solutions has led us from stone tools to particle accelerators. Readings, videos, and projects will introduce important design concepts and strategies. Students learn how leading companies and institutions foster innovation. More importantly, they will be introduced to design as a way of viewing the world and their innate power to change it. This course has academic requirements such as written assignments and presentations. It also has hands-on production based requirements in the form of individual and group projects. No prior design or construction experience is necessary but a willingness to experiment and take risks is. In addition to texts, students will be expected to purchase a limited number of inexpensive tools and materials.

Finding Your Voice, Changing the World

Finding your voice is not a singular achievement; it is a metaphor for the process of self-development and for expressing what we, as whole human beings, are called to do at differing times in our lives. This course explores voice and development, and thus what it means to be human, in relation to making contributions to others. A particular emphasis is placed on the role of education in finding our voices and changing the world.

Humanity of the Inhumane

"Hitler was human." "Our laws call for us to kill people for killing people." "It is not only just, but even merciful to eat the children of the poor." These are the type of statements we will find ourselves pondering as part of this course. Over the semester, students will examine how inhumane acts, ideas, and people represent an essential piece of our shared humanity. We will attempt to identify and define characteristics of inhumanity and in doing so come to recognize how these characteristics play a significant role in the way we, as humans, look at and experience the world. In this context we will read and examine Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, as well as other shorter works. This course is not a black and white examination of insane, horrific, and immoral things; it is an examination of how our interest in and connection with the insane, horrific, and immoral stems from what we share as humans. After completing this course students should be able to understand how the lure *and* repulsion of the inhumane are at the heart of what connects Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (written in 1729) to a modern-day issue of *The Onion*. That's just one example. Over the course of the semester students will be presented with a multitude of additional examples, each offering widely different insights into why humans are, above most everything else, inherently fascinated with and incredibly adamant about what we should and should not do, think, and be.

Human Rights on the World Stage

The struggle for human dignity, justice and freedom is universal and timeless. It recognizes neither cultural nor historical boundaries. The history of theatre and film is filled with the work of artists who have persistently and forcefully rebelled against tyranny, oppression and exploitation of all kinds. More importantly, however, is that plays and films movingly humanize the conflicts that they depict. Ultimately plays and films are not about “issues;” they are about human beings. Further, no matter what may separate these works from each other, they all attempt to shed light on the same basic question: what does it mean to be human? A range of plays and films will be read, screened and discussed that offer unique and compelling insights into these and other issues.

Love: For Better or Worse

Robert Browning wrote “Take away love and our earth is a tomb”, which is to say love is the essence of being, and for the purpose of this course, the essence of being human. The Ancient Greeks had three words for love: eros, philia, and agape, each corresponding to a type of love distinct from the others: sexual, non-sexual, and divine. In this course, we explore various manifestations of love in literature, history, and philosophy, coming to terms with an indomitable force of human nature that inspires not only what is best in our shared humanity but also what is worst.

More Than Human, Less Than Human

Inquiry is the foundation for this interdisciplinary course. “Inquiry is, by its definition, a process of asking questions and trying out answers” (Bloom, White, and Borrowman iii). In this course, students will consider writers with a variety of academic and social perspectives on a number of important philosophical and ethical ideas related to the question “What does it mean to be human?”

On Being Human: Honors

Our starting point for this course is expressed by the title of one of Gauguin’s greatest paintings. The end point will be some answers to this question, and the middle constitutes the middle of working out these answers or, even better, more pertinent question, and the middle constitutes the middle of working out these answers or, even better, more pertinent questions. The compelling question about such questions is “Who do we mean when we say ‘we’?” When I identify my membership with a we, to what extends does that include and, more significantly, exclude others? Shelley’s novel Frankenstein, will be the first work we’ll read. We will look at a large array of responses to Gauguin’s questions - works of art, music, theatre, film, and literature; works and statements in sociology, psychology, history, and politics; and words and statements about linguistics, philosophy, the cognitive sciences, and evolutionary biology. The basic methodology of discussion will be ongoing in-class debates then carried into the surrounding community in order to engage the community in these debates.

The Stories We Tell: How Narratives Define Us in the 21st Century

This course will investigate how we, as humans, define ourselves by the stories we tell. While acknowledging the rich history of storytelling throughout human history, this course will focus on contemporary narrative practices. Students will be introduced to various methods of storytelling utilized by contemporary artists. Specific attention will be given to non-linear and image-based narrative methods in short stories, novels, films, photography, and web-based projects. Additionally, various forms of social media will be examined to see how they, too, construct narratives in, and of, our contemporary culture.

Women as Storytellers

Storytelling is an ancient art that has shaped the human mind and united the human spirit. It is how we share our common experiences and find our path to the future. This course will examine and explore the role of women storytellers in theatre and film as we experience the female perspective as directors, producers, screenwriters, playwrights and actors. The focus of the course will be on the varied ways that women have used plays and films to outline their unique perspective and in doing so affect the larger human experience.

The Design Impulse

In this course, students will investigate the practice and theory of design as the foundation for all human endeavor. Anytime someone attempts to improve a thing, a situation, or their environment they are engaged in the practice of design. This urge for improvement, to envision and implement increasingly better solutions has lead us from stone tools to particle accelerators. Readings, videos, and projects will introduce important design concepts and strategies. Students learn how leading companies and institutions foster innovation. More importantly, they will be introduced to design as a way of viewing the world and their innate power to change it. This course has academic requirements such as written assignments and presentations. It also has hands-on production based requirements in the form of individual and group projects. No prior design or construction experience is necessary but a willingness to experiment and take risks is. In addition to texts, students will be expected to purchase a limited number of inexpensive tools and materials.

LAS 2

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

LAS 1120 – COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA

Art and Diversity: African-American Art

Why have issues such as race, gender and class been historically excluded from the study of art history? Why is it important that histories of art reflect the kind of gender and racial diversity seen in present-day America? This course takes these questions as central ones to understanding how race, gender and class impact artists who explore these issues through their art. In this class we are exploring the history of African American art and culture in particular, paying close attention to literature, music and art and artifacts created during the years of slavery, the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement.

Online Communities in America

In this course, students will discuss the social impacts of online communities. The course will provide a brief introduction to ethics and to the history of computing and the Internet in America. Through readings, lecture, writing, and discussion, we will identify and explore many cultural, social, philosophical, and economic effects of information technology (computers) on individuals, groups, and society in our country. Current issues that will be discussed include social networking, electronic voting, spyware, spam, and electronic commerce and the impact each of these has had on our society. This course is directed toward undergraduate students who wish to understand the impact, in particular, of computers and, in general, of what has been termed high technology, on the institutions, beliefs, values, tastes, activities, ideals, paradigms, and processes of our society.

Organizational Behavior

This course provides experiential study to explore the functioning of work group behavior. Specific interest areas covered include leadership, persuasion, organizational effectiveness, and other related topics that enhance the students' ability to manage people and projects in an organization.

Stemming the Tide of Consumerism

Many of us in America frequent the mall, purchase the latest gadgets to stay hip and current, and may not have a clue why we decided on the brewing style of cappuccino we just ordered at the café. Anti Consumerism is a growing network of groups and communities who look to stem the tide of American commercialized spending. Groups such as "Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood" have successfully lobbied for legislation restricting advertising on school grounds, restricted licensed characters used for selling junk foods to children, and have effectively stopped some controversial toy production. Communities are coming together to ban Wal-Mart and other businesses detrimental to society. This course examines the fundamental social pressure of living in an American consumer-based society and what some groups are doing about it.

The Evolution of the American Democracy:

This course will provide an analysis of American history from the perspectives of political thought & process, as well as the concurrent developments in economics and culture. The course begins amidst the turmoil of the early modern Scientific Revolution and the Protestant Reformation and traces the development of the sovereignty of the people from 16th century Europe to the controversial election of 2000.

The Meaning of the Media Image

This course is a critical inquiry into the ways that media communicate and manipulate information through technical elements such as photography, editing, and sound. Students apply the knowledge and skills gained in this course to specific screenings. Students will analyze the ways that media communicate and manipulate information, and expand their media literacy skills. The goal of this course is to help students become more critical viewers of media.

The New South

This course is about the history, politics, culture and economics of the New South. Growing out of the ashes of the Civil War, the new south has evolved from poverty and institutionalized White supremacy through the end of World War II to a civil rights movement which has changed the South forever.

U.S. Legal Systems This course provides an introduction to the American Legal System, including its history, philosophy, and practices. Students will consider the structure and function of the legal system, several substantive areas of the law (e.g. torts and contract law), and the dynamic relationship between law and social policy.

U.S. Politics

This course examines the basic concepts involved in the study of politics. The four classic areas of Political Science are stressed: International Relations, US Politics, Comparative Government, and Political Theory and Methodology. Topics include nature of the state, purpose of government, justice, and the definition and use of power.

U.S. Social Problems

The U.S. faces many challenging social problems, including crime, violence, unemployment, poverty, greed and discrimination. In this course, we will be studying some of these problems and their root causes and consequences. We will also examine some of the efforts/suggestions to address these problems.