

# OBERLIN COLLEGE

## FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR PROGRAM

The First-Year Seminar Program (**FYSP**) invites incoming students to begin their Oberlin educational experience in a small seminar setting. The topics and academic approaches of seminars are diverse, but all are designed to help students hone their critical thinking, discussion, and writing skills. First-year seminars introduce students to resources for learning at Oberlin by engaging our libraries, art museum, writing center, career development center, the cities of Oberlin and Cleveland, and more. First-year seminars allow students to get to know a faculty member well and to reflect upon the personal value and social relevance of a liberal arts education.

### SAMPLE FYSP COURSES

#### **“In This Here Place, We Flesh”:**

##### **Underground Railroad and Sanctuary Spaces**

Exploring sanctuary for enslaved people who moved through Oberlin on the journey to freedom, and for Africans who attended Oberlin from the 19th-century forward; exploring the underground railroad in literature and art.

##### **What’s for Dinner? The Science of Healthy Eating**

Analyzing the strengths and limitations of different types of nutritional research to evaluate newly emerging dietary claims.

##### **Deconstructing Technology**

Exploring the people, science, and industries involved in the making of cell phones, computers, and other technologies; assessing technology’s impact on the environment and society at large.

##### **Faith and the Ballot Box**

Weighing Thomas Jefferson’s “wall of separation” between church and state against the reality of a thoroughfare of exchange. Examining the 2020 presidential election and appraising the most religiously diverse Congress in American history.

##### **Nature and the Environment in East Asian Culture**

Exploring concepts of nature influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and traditional aesthetics in the context of environmentalism and sustainability.

##### **Silence=Death: Rhetorics of HIV/AIDS**

Exploring contested intersections of science, culture, and politics. Engaging remotely with a class at the American University of Nigeria.

##### **Comics: The Art of Graphic Storytelling**

Investigating the increasingly influential graphic narrative, illuminating artistic and storytelling approaches to themes of politics, sexuality, class, violence, memory, and cultural and ethnic diversity.

## **The Sixth Extinction**

Exploring biodiversity through readings and multiple weekend trips to sites of local conservation.

## **Writing Religion and Gender Across Cultures**

Considering the religious lives of women (including trans\* women) from Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Vodou communities in the United States and internationally.

## **Know Your Place: Civic Humanism and Community Engagement**

Working reciprocally within communities and engaging the humanities as a vehicle for active citizenship.

## **Black Women's Narratives on Page, Stage, and Screen**

Exploring storytelling styles of African American women authors in fiction, playwrighting, stagecraft, and film.

## **Heroes and Villains**

Exploring in our local region the ways in which history, culture, belief systems, and time shape our understanding of heroism and villainy.

## **Conceptions of Self in East and West**

Examining the nature of human existence from the ancient and modern West and from East Asia; sensitively comparing these diverse visions of human life.

## **Mind, Machines, and God**

Analyzing how carbon-based entities and machines process, store, and learn from experience. Understanding programming's impact on society from the neuroscience of thought to LEGO Mindstorm robots.

## **Cryptography**

Exploring the science of making and breaking secret codes. Drawing ideas from number theory to study the RSA cryptosystem for secure data transmission.

## **Natural History of the Vermillion River Watershed**

Uncovering the life forms and natural processes of the Vermilion River and its tributaries, local waters that have been carving into the northern Ohio landscape for over 10,000 years.

## **So You Want to Be an Intellectual**

Learning to think and communicate as a citizen of the international republic of letters, analyzing the tools of speaking truth to power.

## **23 and Us: Genetics in Contemporary Society**

Exploring what it means to access our nucleotide sequences. Examining society's use and abuse of genetic knowledge.