Faculty First-Year Seminars:
Fall 2012 UMass Amherst
Organized in the order the seminars are listed on SPIRE
Revised 6/6/12

Capitalism, Race, and the World
FFYS 197AFA Spire #61433 Tuesdays 1:00 – 1:50
Amilcar Shabazz, Afro-American Studies, shabazz@afroam.umass.edu
This seminar explores the past, present, and future relationship of capitalism and race by investigating the economic realities of people of African descent in various countries, especially the U.S., Colombia, Cape Verde, France, Brazil, Jamaica and South Africa. Modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor, exist on the basis of what Karl Marx called the “formation and augmentation of capital.” Elombe Brath has observed that Africans are the only people in the world have been held as capital. Grading: Letter grading with the option of Pass/Fail

Culture, Community and Language
FFYS 197ANTH2 Spire #57094 Thursdays 4:00-4:50
Jean S. Forward, Anthropology, jforward@anthro.umass.edu
This seminar will examine the relationship between language, community and culture. The human body is adapted for communication and the use of language and the intimate relationship between the three reveals a culture's worldview, values and identity. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

African American Material and Expressive Culture
FFYS 197ANTH4 Spire #61438 Thursdays 11:15 – 12:05
Whitney Battle-Baptiste, Anthropology, wbbaptiste@anthro.umass.edu
This seminar will introduce students to a genealogy of African and African American material and expressive culture through an analysis of the tangible and intangible elements of its people. Using an anthropological lens, this course provides the basic methods used by the discipline to understand and engage with living communities. Examples of our exploratory exercise include an introduction to African cosmology, public festivals and parades in the Caribbean, Capoeira in Brazil and other dance forms, music, clothing and folk traditions that stretch across the African Diaspora. Grading: Pass/Fail

Introduction to Art and Art Making
FFYS 197ART Spire #57047 Thursdays 4:00- 4:50
John Simpson, Commonwealth Honors College, simpson@acad.umass.edu
This seminar will serve as an introduction and overview of the basic processes of art, art making and art history. Students will gain knowledge of their individual creative skills as well as being introduced to the art and art history departments. Lessons concerning graphite, charcoal, mixed media and acrylic paint will be included, along with a guided tour of the Springfield Art Museums in October. Lectures will consist of group drawing sessions, critiques and selected readings, supplemented by short weekly drawing assignments. Little or no art experience required. Grading: Pass/Fail

Microbes and Man
FFYS 197BIO Spire #61443 Mondays 12:20-1:10
Margaret Riley, Biology, riley@bio.umass.edu
Microbes run the world. It’s that simple. Although we cannot usually see them, microbes are essential for every part of human life indeed all life on Earth. Every process in the biosphere is touched by the seemingly endless capacity of microbes to transform the world around them. This seminar is designed for undergraduates with little background in the biological sciences, who are curious about this unseen life on Earth and who want to understand how microbes have influenced essentially every aspect of biological evolution. Grading: Pass/Fail
Bioethics
FFYS 197BIO2 Spire #61439 Mondays 10:10-11:00
Eric L. Bittman, Biology, kmsiaroski@provost.umass.edu
Recent advances in molecular biology, neuroscience and developmental biology, to name just three areas of biology, call for reconsideration of current social views and legal practices. When does life begin? When does it end? When is it ethical to manipulate our genetic material? Which of us is responsible for his actions, and how should those who show aberrant behaviors (or even beliefs) be treated? Students will read introductory articles considering these issues, discuss and consider relevant data, and prepare a presentation and term paper on a subject of interest to them that is relevant to topics covered in the course. Grading: Letter Grading with option of Pass/Fail

“New” Ways of Making Families: Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Technologies
FFYS 197CHC1 Spire #61441 Wednesdays 4:40-5:30
Martha Yoder, Commonwealth Honors College, marthay@history.umass.edu
While neither assisted reproduction nor adoption are entirely new, both have radically increased in recent decades, potentially transforming the face of the American family. No longer performed in secrecy nor limited to heterosexual couples, assisted reproduction methods such as sperm and egg donation, in vitro fertilization, and surrogacy have become increasingly sophisticated. Meanwhile the landscape of adoption has been redefined by transparency, the rise of transracial and international adoption, and the partial acceptance of single and same-sex adoptive parents. In this reading- and discussion-based seminar we will explore and debate ethical, psychological, and cultural issues arising from these "new" ways of making families. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

Indigenous Chemical Technologies of the Americas
FFYS 197CHEM1 Spire #61431 Mondays 4:40-5:30
Michael Knapp, Chemistry, mknapp@chem.umass.edu
The goal of this seminar is to explore American Indian civilizations through the lens of chemical technologies. From the use of minerals for artwork, to ceramics and metalworking, civilization relies on chemical techniques. We will discuss the relationship between natural resources and the products of civilizations found in the Americas. In the process, first-year students will achieve two goals: to relate chemical principles to the real world; and gain an introduction to the material culture of Native American Indians. Grading: Pass/Fail

Why the Arts?
FFYS 197CMPL2 Spire #61448 Mondays 3:35 – 4:25
Laszlo Dienes, Language, Literature and Cultures (LLC) dienes@complit.umass.edu
The goal of this seminar is to alert our incoming students to the essential role(s) the arts play in the world, and to the value of becoming familiar with and studying those arts as one of the best ways to become a cultured, informed, educated citizen. The method of this seminar is an open-ended, free-wheeling discussion of what the arts are, how they differ, how they can (and should) be looked at and evaluated, and why (or if) they are important for society and in human life. We will use the internet in class for constant illustration both of the different arts themselves (introducing students to great examples of the visual and performing arts, of music, architecture, film, poetry, etc.), and of the vastly different possible ways of analyzing and interpreting them (by looking at famous excerpts, quotations, and definitions from well-known articles, essays, or books by a wide variety of thinkers from Aristotle to Dienes…). Grading: Pass/Fail

Media, Fashion, Culture, Style
FFYS 197COMM1 Spire #57587 Wednesdays 3:35 - 4:25
Anne Ciecko, Communication, ciecko@comm.umass.edu
This seminar will look at the use of clothing for communicative expression and cultural meaning, and the way it has been represented in the media. Our interdisciplinary approach will be informed mainly by cultural studies and film/media studies but will draw from other discourses and fields such as journalism, cultural anthropology, visual rhetoric/semiotics, religious studies, gender and sexuality studies, performance theory, and design practices. Our main examples will include cinema, television, street-style and personal style blogs, fashion journalism, and advertisements. We will incorporate short readings, classroom discussion, short writing exercises (cultural critiques), in-class interactive hands-on activities/presentations/projects, and at least one field trip. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail
The US economy entered its most serious post-war recession in 2007. Five years later, unemployment remains high with nearly 7 million fewer jobs than when the recession began. Its magnitude and duration make this great recession a problem for economic policy and theory. In contrast with the failed policies of the Federal Reserve and Hoover Administration in the early 1930s, the Bernanke Federal Reserve and the Obama Administration have conducted aggressive monetary and fiscal policy which stanched the bleeding and stopped the collapse before reaching the dimensions of the Great Depression of the 1930s, without promoting a sustained recovery. We will discuss the appropriate economic policy for the United States and its major trading partners and consider the implications of the Great Recession for our understanding of macroeconomic theory. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

Ready, Set, Write: Fiction Writer’s Workshop for Beginners

Are you interested in fiction writing but don’t know where to start? In this seminar, students will participate in a professional-grade writer’s workshop geared for beginners. With the guidance of the instructor, an award-winning graphic novelist and ethnographic writer, they will read seminal short fiction and instructive texts and participate in group and individual writing exercises. Students will learn to talk about and analyze short fiction and will develop their own pieces through formal work shopping with peers and consultation with the instructor. The course goal is for each student to 1) develop writerly habits, 2) workshop and produce one polished, edited short piece (8-10 pages) by the end of the semester and 3) write short self-assessments about the piece, the writing process and the writer’s life. Grading: Pass/Fail

Negotiating Culture in Global and Local Contexts

With today's emphasis on globalization, many students have become interested in learning about culture and cultural diversity, thereby enhancing their understanding of their own cultural heritages and that of others. The seminar examines the unifying fabric of American culture, comprising socio-cultural values, attitudes, and traditions. To help students develop their intercultural competency for global contexts, the seminar offers units on the diversity of ethnicities, race, and religions that represent contemporary global worldviews, gender roles, and the issue of stereotyping. The seminar also offers a number of useful strategies to help students adjust to the local university culture. Included are practical strategies for improving oral communication skills, enhancing the development of critical-thinking skills, and writing and reading more effectively in the academic register, all of which are necessary for successful professional work in local and global contexts. Grading: Pass/Fail

Know Your Food

Learn the science of cooking, food preparation, food supply and safety. This seminar series will offer basic knowledge of food science that you recognize from food on your plate. Learn traditional food science along with the latest food technology trends. Topics include all fatty foods, sweeteners, genetically modified foods, organic foods, food borne outbreaks, wine, chocolate, as well as consumer aspects of food development. Grading: Pass/Fail
Writers Responding to Art: Literary Responses to Figurative or Spatial Art Forms
FFYS 197FRIT1 Spire #61447 Thursdays 4:00-4:50
Arthur Figliola, Language, Literature and Culture (LLC), afigliola@frital.umass.edu
This seminar will seek to explore the basic belief that comprehension is a reciprocal, or two-way process comprising the artist’s expressive desire, or wish to convey information, and the ability and willingness of the observer/reader/consumer to assimilate in some way the idea(s) that the artist wishes to convey. The cultural contexts of both the creator and the receiver (in this case, both the responding writer, and the students in the class) will also be examined as the class as a whole will consider both the original artistic work and the nature of the written response. Cases to be considered include Tabucchi’s ‘I volatili del Beato Angelico’; Orhan Pamyuk’s My Name is Red; Prévert’s poems on Van Gogh and and Picasso; and Washington Irving’s Tales of the Alhambra. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

Nature Writing
FFYS 197HIST8 Spire #61423 Mondays 3:35-4:25
David Glassberg, History, glassberg@history.umass.edu
Each week, students will read and discuss short examples of American nature writing in chronological order, and have the opportunity to write and share some of their own. Authors will include H.D. Thoreau, John Muir, Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Wallace Stegner, Wendell Berry, Terry Tempest Williams, and Gary Snyder. Grading: Pass/Fail

A New Middle East? The Arab World and the US after 2011
FFYS 197LEG1 Spire #61436 Wednesdays 10:10- 11:00
David Mednicoff, Cntr for Pub Policy and Admin (CPPA)/Middle East Stud, mednic@legal.umass.edu
This seminar will introduce students generally to Middle Eastern modern history and politics, with a particular look at the possible meaning and results of the uprisings that took place throughout the Arab world in 2011. The seminar will consider the role of the U.S. in the region, Islam, Israel, Iran and Turkey, in addition to issues of Arab society, culture and politics. The course will include video discussions with groups of students in the Middle East, and serve as a good background for further coursework in Middle Eastern Studies. Students will be expected to read between 25 and 50 pages of week, including Marc Lynch’s 2012 general interest book, The Arab Uprising. Students will develop experience in facilitating discussions, as well as researching current political issues. Grading: Letter grading with the option of Pass/Fail

What Is Authenticity?
FFYS 197PHIL2 Spire #61437 Wednesdays 11:15 – 12:05
Ernesto V. Garcia, Philosophy, evg@philos.umass.edu
What is the nature of the self? What makes us really us? Do we create ourselves, or are we just the products of our environment? What does it mean to be an authentic individual as opposed to an inauthentic person living in ‘bad faith’? Is there even a true self at all? This course examines the ideal of ‘authenticity’? The main text will be Charles Guignon’s On Being Authentic, which offers an insightful survey of classical and modern views about authenticity. In addition, we will read a few short literary works including Tolstoy’s The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Kafka’s Metamorphosis, Sartre’s No Exit, and J.D. Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye. Our main goal will be to explore what it means to be ‘authentic’ or to be ‘true to ourselves? from the perspectives of literature, psychology, religion, and philosophy. Grading: Pass/Fail

The Polymer Age
FFYS 197POLY Spire #61445 Tuesdays 4:00-4:50
Shaw Ling Hsu & Sam Gido, Polymer Science & Engineering, slhsu@polysci.umass.edu
The rise of human civilization is marked by the development of ever more advanced materials: Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age. How will future historians refer to our time? The Silicon Age, or Perhaps the Age of Polymers? Polymers encompass a broad spectrum of our world from the mundane, such as plastics for packaging, to the cutting edge, such as the wings of advanced aircraft, or flexible electronic devices. The DNA that encodes the blueprints for life, and the proteins that build our bodies, are also polymers. First-year students will be introduced to polymer enabled advances and opportunities in biomedical engineering, electronics, energy, packaging, clothing and other important applications. Grading: Pass/Fail
Feast or Famine: Food, Disease and Sustainability
FFYS 197PSIS1  Spire #57017  Wednesdays 2:30 – 3:20
Dan Cooley, Microbiology, dcoolel@microbio.umass.edu
What’s for dinner? We’ve asked that question since people lived in caves, but how we answer it today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, may well determine humans as a species survive. What’s at stake in our eating choices is not only our own and our children’s health, but the health of the environment that sustains life on earth. This seminar will read selections from Michael Pollan’s book The Omnivore’s Dilemma and related work as a basis for discussing the ways we grow and eat food. We will talk about how our food system can produce diseases in us, and how diseases in our food may lead to future famines. We’ll look at Big Macs and fries, and organic tofu, and try to decide what things are most important to healthy food production and eating. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

To Bee or Not to Bee: Cause & Impact of Honeybee Decline
FFYS 197PSIS3  Spire #57103  Wednesdays 11:15 – 12:05
John Burand, Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences, jburand@microbio.umass.edu
The dramatic decline in honeybees over the past several years related to Colony Collapse Disorder has raised the public’s awareness to the importance of these insects in our everyday life. This seminar will use the popular book Fruitless Fall: The Collapse of the Honeybee and the Coming Agricultural Crisis by Rowan Jacobsen as a guide to examine the importance of bees in our society, the possible causes of declining honeybee health, as well as learn more about the biology and social society of bees. Students in the seminar will have a chance to get “up close and personal with bees” with a trip to a local apiary, a lesson from a master beekeeper and an inside look into a beehive. Rowan Jacobsen’s book Fruitless Fall: The Collapse of the Honeybee and the Coming Agricultural Crisis will be used as a guide for weekly seminar discussion. Grading: Letter grading with the option of Pass/Fail

Climate Change: Biological Effects of Global Warming & Air Pollution
FFYS 197PSIS4  Spire #57106  Wednesdays 12:20 – 1:10
William J. Manning, Plant Soil and Insect Sciences, wmanning@microbio.umass.edu
An introduction to climate and weather followed by consideration of the cause(s) of global warming and air pollutants, such as ozone and sulfate aerosol. Biological effects of global warming and air pollution on humans, animals and plants and major ecosystems will be considered in depth. The Goal is to gain a basic understanding of how global warming affects you and the world around you. Grading: Letter grading with the option of Pass/Fail

Genetically Modified Crops and Foods: Facts, Myths and Controversy
FFYS 197PSIS5  Spire #61422  Mondays 6:00-7:00
Om Parkash, Plant, Soil, and Insect Sciences, parkash@psis.umass.edu
In the recent years, there has been an unprecedented progress in the Agricultural Biotechnology via the recombinant DNA technology. Both food and non-food crops have been genetically modified for specific purposes such as the insect resistance, herbicide tolerance, enhanced nutritional values such as Golden rice with enhanced vitamin A, and lately for biofuels. However, this sector of agricultural biotechnology has been one of the most controversial subjects among public interest groups, consumers and politicians. This seminar will cover the gamut of topics and educate students about the benefits and risks of GM foods, human health and safety, gene flow, and facts and myths about GM foods. Grading: Pass/Fail

An Exploration of Medicinal Plants and Human Health
FFYS 197PSIS6  Spire #61449  Mondays 11:15 – 12:05
Lyle E. Craker, Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences, craker@pssci.umass.edu
In this seminar, we will explore the use of plant materials in conventional and alternative medicine systems to gain an understanding of the importance of these plant materials in human health. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail
Clinical Neuropsychology  
FFYS 197PSY2  Spire #57272  Wednesdays 3:35-4:25  
Rebecca Ready, Psychology, ready@psych.umass.edu  
Neuropsychology is the study of brain behavior relationships; for example, learning how function in the brain is related to memory, emotion, and psychopathology. Clinical neuropsychology is the application of this knowledge to assess and treat persons with neurological, medical, and psychiatric disorders. In this seminar, we will read autobiographical and fictional accounts of neurologic and mental illness and learn how they relate to brain structure and function. Readings will be accessible to a “lay” audience or persons who have no prior knowledge of brain dysfunction. Grading: Pass/Fail

Preparing for a Career in Clinical Psychology: It Begins Early!  
FFYS 197PSY6  Spire #57115  Mondays 11:15 – 12:05  
Michael J. Constantino, Ph. D. Psychology, mconstantino@psych.umass.edu  
This seminar is a specialty seminar for incoming first-year students that are potentially interested in a career in clinical psychology. Although academic and career decision-making is an evolving, long-term process (and one that you are just beginning), it is vital to be informed and prepared as you engage in the process. Clinical psychology is a broad discipline; thus, it is important to appreciate the distinctions between clinically oriented careers, and the educational steps needed to enter such careers. The earlier you develop this appreciation, the better served you will be to make important academic decisions from the very beginning of your undergraduate career. Waiting until your junior or senior year to engage in important preparatory experiences can set you behind in your potential quest for graduate school, postgraduate jobs, internships, etc. Thus, the goal of this seminar is to provide you with an introduction to clinical psychology, and to help you develop a long-range plan for maximizing your undergraduate years in a way that will prepare you for graduate-level study and ultimately a career in the field. Grading: Pass/Fail

Race, Place and the Environment  
FFYS 197RP1  Spire #61455  Tuesdays 11:15 – 12:05  
Elizabeth Brabec, Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning, ebrabec@larp.umass.edu  
Ever wonder how different cultures create such different places to live? This seminar will explore how race and culture affects how we interact with our environment, creating communities and urban environments that reflect how we view the world. We will also explore how cultural attitudes and values affect how we see “nature” and how willing we are to protect the environment. This seminar will virtually explore communities in the United States, Central America, Europe and the Asia. It will also integrate multiple forms of media to explore concepts of space and place. Grading: Letter grading with option of Pass/Fail

Introduction to Sustainability Science and Culture  
FFYS 197RP4  Spire #61435  Wednesdays 10:10 – 11:00  
Flavia Montenegro-Menezes, Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning, flaviamontm@larp.umass.edu  
This interdisciplinary seminar will address the theory and practice of sustainability. Its primary goal is to introduce concepts and help students to develop a framework to better understand the challenges surrounding the transition towards sustainability, with regard to both human well-being and the protection of the environment. Class discussions will involve a broad range of topics related to global climate, ecosystems, quality of life, poverty and affluence, and provide a basic overview of the complexities involving social, ecological, political, cultural and economic goals. Students will become acquainted with different approaches and sub-disciplinary fields concerned with sustainability issues, as well as with the roles of scientists, practitioners, public involvement and decision-makers in transitioning towards sustainability. This course will utilize the compilation of published scholarly articles, edited by Robert Kates in 2010. PDF copies of additional readings will be available on the Moodle web site one week before each class. Grading: Pass/Fail
**When People Get Together: The Good, The Bad, and The Funny**

FFYS 197SCH1  Spire #61442  Thursdays 1:00 – 1:50  
**Rommel Salvador,** Hospitality and Tourism Management, rsalvador@isenberg.umass.edu  
Through games and experiential exercises, students in this seminar will be provided the opportunity to reexamine assumptions about interpersonal relations and human behavior in organizations. Topics will include social perception, group dynamics, managing conflict, and celebrating diversity. The application of concepts and topics covered to careers in the field of business, especially hospitality and tourism management, will be explored. Grading: Pass/Fail

**Socially Responsible (Green) Business**

FFYS 197SOM1  Spire #61440  Wednesdays 12:20 – 1:10  
**Anurag Sharma,** Management, shrmn@som.umass.edu  
This seminar is designed to acquaint students with the theory and practice of socially responsible business. We will read articles and books on the subject (e.g., Harvard Business Review on Green Business Strategy; The Truth About Green Business) and also critically evaluate several publicly traded companies to understand how green business is reshaping the economic landscape. Grading: Pass/Fail

**Africa in the Media**

FFYS 197THEAT3  Spire #61444  Wednesdays 3:35-4:25  
**Megan Lewis,** Theater, meghanlewis@theater.umass.edu  
Antithesis of civilization and the birthplace of humanity. Deep, dark, place of bestial wildness and romantic canvas for Western fantasy. Land of despots, famine and disease and site of hope. Africa, with its dynamic clashes of culture, language, religion, politics, and landscape, has historically been depicted and performed as a tapestry of conflicting visions. Using performance studies as a framework, this seminar will explore representations of Africa across various media from several vantage points: visions of the colonizers, Hollywood’s digestion of Africa, Wall Street, Madison Avenue, and Washington’s manipulation of the continent, and literary, dramatic, cinematic and artistic visions and voices by and about Africans themselves. Each class will include select readings, lively discussion, and viewing of select multimedia sources. Dr. Megan Lewis is a South African-American theater, performance, and film scholar whose research concerns performance across Africa generally, and staging race and gender in South Africa in particular. Grading: Pass/Fail