

THE FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM

THE LIVING AND LEARNING experience of the First-Year Program (FYP) is centered on a residentially based, one-semester, team-taught interdisciplinary course that stresses communication skills (including writing, speaking and library research), critical thinking and close student/faculty relationships.

At St. Lawrence, we call these living-learning units “residential colleges.” Most of these colleges will have 30 to 35 of your classmates, and be overseen by two instructors along with a group of student life staff. We have found that students who both live together and take a common course together in this fashion are more comfortable participating in class discussions and find it easier to create productive and friendly relationships with faculty and staff.

In the pages that follow, you will have the chance to express your preference as to which course, and therefore which residence, you will be placed in. The descriptions of these courses are below. The topics vary across each residential college, but all of them meet common communication skills and critical thinking goals and guidelines created by the faculty. Each First-Year Program course features an interdisciplinary approach to its theme or topic, which provides an introduction to the liberal arts as well as a basis for cultivating the intellectual skills and passion that a St. Lawrence education demands. The FYP also stresses engaged learning, in which you are expected to take an active and responsible role in your education both in and out of the classroom.



Associate Professor of Philosophy Erin McCarthy (standing, left) literally brings Asian culture into her First-Year Program teaching.

Your academic advisor will be one of the instructors in your FYP course. The faculty are drawn from across the University, and because your academic advisor is also one of your instructors, you can build a strong relationship with her or him. Your advisor will know you from the day you arrive, and will know you as a whole person: therefore, he or she will quickly become a strong resource for you.

Linking course sections with specific residences in living-learning communities also means that you can integrate many of the course experiences with your social and community relationships. You will live with two or three community assistants (or CAs), who are upper-class students trained to be resources for any residential issues that might arise and for making the transition to college. The CAs and the other student life staff offer a full range of co-curricular programs in the residence that involve you, your faculty and the staff in learning experiences that take you well beyond the conventional limits of the classroom. As part of living and learning in the FYP, you might find yourself working in the residence hall with your classmates on a group presentation for class, having a community discussion of issues facing first-year students or enjoying a movie night with your FYP faculty.

In addition, we hope that you will use the FYP as a springboard to build significant connections to others at St. Law-

AlcoholEdu®

As part of St. Lawrence's high-risk alcohol use prevention program, all incoming first-year students are required to complete a course entitled AlcoholEdu® for College, a Web-based alcohol prevention program being used at more than 350 colleges and universities around the country.

In early July, prior to coming to campus, all first-year students will receive a letter from St. Lawrence University President Daniel F. Sullivan, in which he discusses AlcoholEdu for College. Instructions on how to login and complete the course are included with his letter.

It is our hope that completion of AlcoholEdu® for College will help make sure you get your college career off to a healthy start. We look forward to partnering with you as we aim to reduce high-risk drinking behavior on campus.

rence by, for example, joining student organizations, participating in the numerous athletic opportunities available, or standing for election to student government. Your CAs will be valuable resources in helping you to make these other connections.

The FYP course counts as the equivalent of 1.5 courses. It is one of the four courses you will take in the fall semester. In the spring semester, you will choose a First-Year Seminar (FYS). Each FYS also counts as 1.5 courses, and each extends the communication skills portion of the FYP by focusing on research and critical inquiry in a seminar environment that emphasizes close student-faculty interaction. In addition to the FYS, you will also take three other courses in the spring, just as you will do in the fall.



Thelomathesian Society or "Thelmo," is St. Lawrence's student government organization.

FYP COURSE DESCRIPTIONS – FALL 2008

Making a Difference: Active Citizenship in a Multicultural Democracy

In this course, participants will explore what it means to be an active citizen in a multicultural democracy, by examining if and how citizens come together to reach collective goals in ways that are fair and just for all. This concern has been with us since our founding fathers attempted to craft a system of government that would ensure that no one faction could champion its interests over the public good. In our conversations, we will look at concerns raised today about potential threats to active citizenship in our democracy, such as increases in the wealth gap, racial tensions, declines in civic engagement and a faltering sense of community. Although the course considers the obstacles we face to multicultural democratic action, most of our attention will be on understanding and using the tools of active citizenship in a diverse society. To enhance that understanding and employing the tools of citizenship, all of us will volunteer in the local community throughout the fall semester. As part of this work, we will explore the role of liberal arts education as a place for positive transformation, both personal and social. Many of our discussions and assignments will center on the role of active citizenship and social justice throughout history and today with examples coming from the Civil Rights Movement and Hurricane Katrina.

Political Economy and Identity in the Age of Globalization

As people, capital, images and ideas move around the globe in ways unimaginable even a decade ago, scholars debate the effects of an increasingly interdependent global culture. Globalization is not one phenomenon but many, a set of interlinked social, economic and political trends with complex causes and uncertain implications for the future. This course seeks to define globalization, and examines the political, economic and ethical debates that swirl around the term. We will look critically and self-consciously at the ways that globalization shapes individual, national and transnational identities. We will consider in detail the evolution of a variety of international institutions, including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, and the ways in which they affect the course of world events and the daily lives of people around the globe. Finally, we will examine the ways in which images from commercials, popular film or news broadcasts bring individuals, groups and nations to define themselves and others in certain ways, and the consequences of this shaping power, both positive and negative.



Finding a Voice: Creativity, Community, and Performance

Each of us is moved in a unique, individual way by the beauty of the art that we see, hear or produce, but the meaning we draw from art is shaped as well by the experiences and ideals that we share within communities.

In performance, a person draws upon individual creativity and collective knowledge to present sounds/images/words that have the potential to clarify our most deeply held values. In part by regularly becoming performers ourselves, we will explore ways in which we can convey our ideas clearly and powerfully. We will also explore ways in which artistic expression conveys meaning in cultures very different from our own.

The course requires no prior training or proficiency as a performer. We ask only that you be willing to express yourself creatively and to share that expression. The college will be housed in a residence that provides space and opportunity for rehearsal and practice, as well as proximity to the University's fine arts, music, and performance and communication arts departments. Taught by an ethnomusicologist and a historian, who sometimes share the stage as saxophonist and guitarist in a local rock and roll band, the college will seek to foster a community that connects serious academic inquiry with artistic creativity, where students can seek their own voices in an actively supportive environment.

Thoreau Lives!

When Henry David Thoreau published his memoir in 1854 about a year spent living alone and close to the land in a cabin in New England, he probably had no inkling that *Walden* would inspire the environmental movement of the 20th century. He certainly would not have predicted the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s, when young people fled the cities and suburbs to take up a lifestyle of subsistence farming and voluntary simplicity in rural regions of America, including Upstate New York, the North Country: a movement which lives on today as ordinary citizens participate in community supported agriculture, "buy local" and seek home-grown sources of energy. Nor could he have foreseen that his cranky, individualistic essay, "Civil Disobedience," would inspire the action and thoughts of political leaders and activists, authors and citizens across the globe wishing to resist the forces of global capitalism, consumerism, war, environmental plunder and the fossil fuel-based economy.

We'll begin with a study of Thoreau and then bring him up to date, studying 20th- and 21st-century environmental writers, and note how the seeds of that prickly New Englander's thought continue to bear fruit and offer hope for the future. We will visit with North Country citizens who have found ways to "live deliberately," as Thoreau wrote, in a culture that tells us it is our patriotic duty to consume and consume and spend and spend.

Finally we will push Thoreau into the future, to ask ourselves, as individuals, how it is that we wish to live, in what kind of community, and in what kind of world.

What Culture Do You Speak? Language and Culture in a Multicultural World

Does how you speak define who you are? Can you understand another culture if you don't speak the language? If you learn another language, will it change who you are? Is knowing more than one language essential to being a global citizen? By sharing our own experiences of language speaking and learning and by examining a wide range of materials – memoirs, films, news clips, songs – we will approach these and other questions related to language acquisition and intercultural communication. Our discussions will center around topics such as body language, accents and attitudes, how we adjust our speech in different situations, and how cultural givens complicate intercultural communication. This highly interactive course, employing for example lectures, oral presentations, group projects, debates, simulations, role-playing and skits, also will give students the opportunity to learn basic vocabulary and phrases from the many languages taught and spoken at St. Lawrence.

Sharing the Continent: Canadian Culture? American Culture?

Our work in this course will focus on the differing national cultures of the two predominantly English-speaking nations of North America: Canada and the United States. Using a comparative historical approach, we will trace the settlement and development of each country from 17th-century beginnings to the present. Our prime concern will be the definition and understanding of each nation's ethos through its differing approaches to Western expansion, governmental structures (presidential versus parliamentary), trade (the fur trade to NAFTA), environmental issues and health care. We shall visit Canada's national capital, Ottawa, and the Fred-eric Remington Art Museum as we compare the cultural experiences of both Canada and the United States, both mythic and real.

Global Questions, Local Activism

Activists are people who seek to transform dominant social structures and create a more just world through collective action. If you are such a person, then Global Questions, Local Activism is for you. We will explore the relationship between the work of activism and the work of asking critical questions, because the journeys of activists often begin with basic questions others are afraid to ask. Rosa Parks asked, "Why should some people have to sit at the back of the bus simply because of the color of their skin?" Aldo Leopold asked, "Why should one species dominate the planet at the expense of others?" More recently, the Dropping Knowledge project (www.droppingknowledge.org) produced 100 questions for our own time, questions such as, "Should we have the right to choose where we live?" and "Why do we consider some lives worth more than others?"

With such questions as models, students will develop their own global questions and engage in activist work that brings their responses to life. Along the way we will read about past and current struggles to address racism, sexism, militarism, economic inequality, environmental degradation and other forms of injustice that continue to make the need for intelligent, creative activism so pressing.

Plagues and Peoples

When considering definitions of illness or wellness, Westerners since the Enlightenment have tended to assume a distinction between mind and body that people in other cultures do not assume. The "body" becomes an object of study, with all its attendant "symptoms" of "illness" to Western medical tradition. The "mind" is considered separate from "body" and from "brain," which is an organ of the "body." Hence we have created a tradition of different practitioners for "physical" and "mental" disorders. In other cultural traditions, one's "body" is not separated from "mind," or from the social fabric of daily life that connects an individual to other members of his or her society.

In this course, we will study cross-cultural approaches to wellness and illness that focus on concepts of the body, "personhood," gender distinctions, definitions of "wellness" and "illness," and the consequences these different belief systems have on approaches to "healing." To understand these issues we will use several primary examples of different kinds of "plagues" that have affected groups of people and their cultures in profound ways. These include the Black Death in 16th-century Europe, Kuru disease in Papua New Guinea and its relationship to Kreutzfeld-Jacob Disease, healing by shamans on three different continents, and radioactive fallout's contribution to cultural change in the Marshall Islands of Oceania. Students interested in health sciences or cross-cultural studies of humanity are encouraged to participate. *Students who take this FYP must also co-enroll in at least one Natural Science distribution lab science.*

Individual and Social Wellness

Mental and physical well-being are in part determined by individual behavior, personal choice and circumstances. Stress, body image, alcohol abuse, fertility control and AIDS represent a small sample of health issues that face all generations in our society, particularly college students. The course will begin with an examination of students' personal mental and physical health values, and then move to an exploration of how well-being may be influenced by gender, race, class, genetic make-up and the environment. These themes will become the basis for examining significant health issues including those related to questions of medical ethics. We will discuss some non-western approaches to health and disease (e.g. traditional Chinese medicine and Native American healing) within this context. Students will prepare a substantial health education presentation on a topic relevant to high school students. Topics may include STDs, AIDS, alcohol and/or drug use, smoking, teen pregnancy, suicide, depression, stress, body image and eating disorders, and dealing with peer pressure.

Conceptualizing Nature

Blending the theoretical with the experiential, this course is organized around the central theme that the idea of "nature" is one that humans have created. We first explore origin myths and

use these myths to locate how peoples perceive and relate to the natural environment. This discussion will be extended to include how our relationship to the natural world is understood through particular types of power and knowledge (e.g., rationalist, scientific, eco-feminist). Second, we look at nature as a landscape that is constructed in various ways by people from different social positions: the poet versus the scientist, the native versus the tourist, the tree cutter versus the tree hugger, the snowmobiler versus the cross country skier, etc. Finally, we contrast the animal rights movement with the many ways in which animals are used – food, pets, lab animals, entertainment – and apply a similar discussion to the social construction of animals.

The course has a community service component; we will construct and maintain local trails. Whenever possible it is our intent to integrate the discussions in the classroom with the experiences of the trail. Moreover, we use a wide variety of pedagogies – excursions into the Adirondacks, GPS and GIS workshops and assignments, writing workshops and artist bookmaking. We also use a variety of texts, including novels, analytical works, films and artistic work.

Having an Impact: Leadership, Teamwork and Motivation

Today's world is highly dynamic and diverse in nature, requiring adaptive thinking and individuals with the ability to lead amidst change. Today's world is also highly collaborative, requiring individuals who can work effectively in a wide range of different groups. In this course, we will consider questions such as, What makes an effective leader or follower? What does history teach us about leadership? What does science teach us about motivation? What do economic theories teach us about teamwork and group dynamics? We will explore the themes of leadership, teamwork and motivation from a variety of different perspectives, and study these issues both intellectually through readings and movies, and practically through participation in activities such as group community service projects.

The Fifties, the Eighties and Today: American Culture across the Generations

Most members of the American public identify themselves as part of a specific generation, from “the Greatest Generation” who fought World War II, to their Baby Boomer children, to the Boomers’ offspring, Generations X and Y. Each generation seems to consider itself unique, throwing off the cultural and social values of previous decades and focusing on new and pressing concerns, yet each comes to see that certain inherent American—and human—values persist. Through literature, film and the study of political events, we will examine the social and cultural climates of the 1950s, the 1980s and the early 2000s, asking you to construct a portrait of your emerging generation.

The Candidates

What are the momentous experiences in life? How do past experiences inform future decisions? Can an individual be an agent of change? This year's presidential election offers a unique opportunity to ask these questions. The focus of this FYP is to consider the trajectory of a life and its most significant driving forces. We will, as a class, construct answers to these questions for the Presidential candidates. We will work to understand how they became candidates and predict what will most inform decisions they make about social issues such as health care, gay marriage, reproductive rights and Iraq. Answering these questions about your own life will become a model to find ways to answer what counts as a momentous event and the outcomes of those events for a life. In the process, we hope to construct a view of the candidates different from the dominant images offered in the media. We expect an interest in current events, not an extensive prior knowledge. As your faculty, we will bring perspectives from biography, social justice and empirical science.

Reading Contemporary Media

What do we mean when we talk about “mainstream” cultural values? To what extent do the media create and reinforce our understanding of what is “normal,” and where must we look for alternative views? In this course, we will study a number of different media (including film, advertising, news media and the Web) in our attempt to define the systems that help create contemporary American values, and we will examine evidence of resistance to those values. Through the lens of current cultural theory, we will focus on matters such as presidential politics, gender differences and social class, in order to enhance our understanding of this important shaper of our culture, the mass media.

Darkness Visible: Race, Mental Illness and Cultural Difference

It is hard to make it through a day without being told how much better off we might be if we considered taking a sleeping pill, an anti-anxiety pill or an antidepressant. Understanding our experiences of exhaustion, social awkwardness and alienation as medical problems depends on a whole set of cultural assumptions about what it means to be a healthy and whole human being. The goal of this course is twofold: to reflect on the ways in which culture shapes our understandings and experiences of mental illness, and to consider how ways of describing what is mentally abnormal reveal our culturally-rooted notions of “normalcy.” Some questions we will consider are: Can the diagnoses of mental illness and models of mental wellness that developed in the West be globally applied? What happens when psychological suffering is overlooked because of a lack of cultural understanding, or when cultural difference is interpreted as mental instability? We will read a range of materials that address living with and making sense of mental illness in non-Western contexts, including autobiography, works of fiction, ethnographic accounts, therapists’ case studies and theoretical texts. Our discussion and exploration of these texts will help us make visible the darkness that too often enshrouds mental illness and racial difference.

The Psychology and Expression of Creativity

What is creativity? In this class, we will explore many historical and current philosophical and psychological theories about creativity's source and purpose, from Aristotle's *Poetics* and Immanuel Kant's ideas about aesthetics, to Amabile's social psychology of intrinsic motivation and Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow. We will examine how the limits set by dominant social structures have stimulated empowering cultural and creative expressions of survival and resistance, such as capoeira (an African-Brazilian dance/fight/game) and African-American spirituals. Topics will include the neurobiological correlates of creativity; personality, intelligences, core attitudes and states of consciousness associated with the creative process; and the necessary balance between improvisation and discipline, playfulness and talent in order to create successfully. This course is well-suited for students who are willing to push themselves toward uninhibited creative expression, especially in the areas of movement and rhythm, creative writing and visual arts, but who are also interested in challenging themselves with rigorous readings in the context of a serious academic exploration of creativity.

Betrothals and Bibliothèques: The Changing Nature of Social Institutions

Reciting vows, setting up a household, raising children. Archiving information, lending books, keeping reading rooms open. They sound completely different – so, why would anyone craft a course that looks at marriage and libraries? Because both demonstrate well the fact that social institutions can and must adapt to the changing world around them. The marriages of your great-great-grandparents are as foreign to the marriages that you are likely to enter as the libraries those great-great-grandparents visited as schoolchildren are to those that you have known since you were children. In this course, we will examine the changes these institutions have undergone with particular attention to their private v. public natures and to the role that technological developments have played in those changes – from the printing press and industrialization to Google and eharmony.com.

Narratives of Identity: Exploring Class, Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation through Stories, Film and Art

While society shapes what it means to be of a certain class, gender, race or sexual orientation, we of course also personally define and shape our own identities. One of the important ways we do this is through the stories we tell others (and ourselves) about who we are.

This is a course about storytelling. We'll begin by examining a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, films and visual art that explore various aspects of identity, and inform our reading and viewing with sociological readings that approach these issues in a more scientific and theoretical way. Then, we'll experiment with different ways of constructing narratives of our own, both through writing about our own experiences of identity and through a project in which we'll gather others' stories about their experiences. Lastly, throughout the semester, we'll pay special attention to "intersections," or points at which the aspects of class, gender, race and sexual orientation meet (and potentially redefine) each other. For example, *Wounded*, by Percival Everett, the first short novel we'll read (and a classic Western with a twist, narrated by a young horse trainer), deals with the intolerance of a Wyoming desert community toward "outsiders," be they blacks, gays or Native Americans, and the uneasy attempts of members of these three groups even to connect to each other.