

2022 First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Gardens: Ecology, Cultural Identity, and Social Change

Amy Boyd

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." Gardens are human constructs that exist both as ecological communities and as a part of our human communities. In this course, we will explore three aspects of gardens: the ecology and biology involved in a garden community; the ways in which gardens come out of human cultures and help maintain our connections with our cultural identity; and the roles that gardens can play in schools, communities, prisons, and other social institutions. We will examine social, political, economic, and environmental issues, how they affect and are affected by gardening programs. We will take what we're learning out of the classroom as we explore gardens on campus and participate in service-learning in community garden programs off-campus.

Instructor Bio: Dr. Amy Boyd is an ecologist and evolutionary biologist who is fascinated by the ways very different kinds of living things interact with one another, especially in cooperative ways. She loves exploring wild places and all the things that live in them, from the Arizona desert to the Costa Rican rainforest to the Appalachian mountains where she makes her home.

Reconnecting With Nature: Wildlife, Wilderness, and Wildness

Mark Brenner

For most of human history, *Homo sapiens* were hunter-gatherers and lived within the constraints imposed by nature. With the development of agriculture, humans began to manipulate nature to a great degree to fit their needs. Subsequently, human populations exploded, and more people moved into cities, further separating themselves from the natural world that sustained them. Today, people in the developed world are so detached from the natural environment that few of them can identify where the food they eat came from, and where their wastes go. Even most of those who participate in outdoor activities such as backpacking and mountain biking do not know the majority of organisms that surround them nor their historic uses. In this course we will look at humans' relationship to the natural world from historical, ethical, and scientific perspectives, and explore ways to reconnect with our environment.

Instructor Bio: I grew up in Wisconsin and spent most of my childhood outside playing in forests and creeks. Consequently, I knew I wanted to be a biologist for as long as I can remember. I have been in the Biology and Environmental Studies departments at WWC for the past 32 years teaching courses such as Ecology, Aquatic Ecology, Mycology (Fungi), and a field-based natural history course in Alaska. I love all things wild and have a strong interest in obtaining my own food from gardening, fishing, hunting, and collecting wild mushrooms and berries.

Stories in Motion

Christey Carwile

Our bodies have the amazing ability to tell stories, even without words. In this class, we will highlight the importance of storytelling as a way to build empathy and celebrate human differences. Using dance, drama, and other movement modalities, we explore creative techniques for representing the human experience by putting stories into motion.

Instructor Bio: Christey Carwile is a cultural anthropologist, dancer, pilates instructor, and movement collaborator. She has researched and published on Afro-Latin dance, women's activism, and water spirit religions in West Africa, and her courses, like Dance, Culture, and Identity and Expressive Arts Through Movement, view and incorporate movement as a way to understand culture and the human experience.

The Disneyfication of American Culture

Paula Garrett

In this course, students explore “Disney” and its relationship to American culture. We will look at the ways Disney--its movies, its theme parks, its merchandise--have impacted and reflected our conceptions of family values, gender, race, class, childhood, and community. We consider how Disney has assumed this influential role in American culture. In studying Disney, we come to better understand what our culture is, who we are, and how we got to be this way.

Instructor Bio:

Paula Garrett publishes in various fields including lgbtg rights, 19th-century American popular culture, and rural healthcare; she also enjoys writing personal essays and teaching queer, southern, and women's lit. She talks incessantly about bikes, kayaks, her wife and son, and tattoos.

Practicing Playfulness: A Fun College Class

Rachel Haley Himmelheber

What if pleasure and joy, two fundamental aspects of play, were crucial to your success as a student? Playful experiences and attitudes actually create the conditions in our brains for our most meaningful and engaged learning. Play encourages risk and innovation and teaches us how to move past failure; play (especially in public, especially as adults) can be a revolutionary act. In this class, we'll take play seriously as we approach the concept from multiple angles, reading and learning about how neuroscientists, activists, artists, philosophers and others think about play. We'll also make art, hang out in nature, play games, act things out, imagine stories, and be creative collaborators. Throughout the semester we'll use an iterative, reflective process that will keep us flexible and curious in our thinking. And most importantly, we will be playful in our approach to every idea, every reading, every assignment, and every class session.

Instructor Bio: Dr. Rachel Haley Himmelheber is a professor of creative writing and a fiction writer who is convinced that having more fun might be the answer to everything. When she's not teaching, reading, or writing, she is often wandering one of the College's many trails with her loud and friendly hound dog Jelly.

Exploring Social Justice Work as a New Community Member

Sarah Himmelheber

This course explores the question: How do we contribute to sustainable social change? Drawing on both community- and campus-based experiential learning projects as well as guest

speakers and readings, students identify and develop skills essential to justice-oriented community work. A range of concepts and strategies from community organizing to self-care support course participants' critical thinking about how societal needs are understood and addressed.

Instructor Bio: Sarah Himmelheber has been teaching social work and serving as Field Director for Warren Wilson's Social Work Program since 2015. A clinical social worker with a diverse set of work, activism, and research interests, Sarah recently completed a certificate in horticultural therapy and looks forward to infusing this modality into her teaching.

You and Your Learning Brain

Annie Jonas

This course explores how the fields of education and neuroscience intersect to guide our current understanding of growth and learning. The course investigates this expanding field through the lens of educators who seek to create equitable and engaging spaces to support all learners. Your brain, and the unique developmental stage of late adolescence, is the starting point for our exploration. This course incorporates an experiential approach to learning that invites students to engage in practices that are brain supportive -- such as regular exercise and mindfulness meditation. The course also includes community engagement with middle school students to put what we learn into practice in support of younger students' growth and development.

Instructor Bio: Annie Jonas is excited about the study of teaching and learning and all aspects of the learning process. Her previous work as an Outward Bound instructor, high school history teacher and director of youth programs offers both inspiration and a foundation for her education courses at Warren Wilson.

Music and Meaning

Kevin Kehrberg

How do people find meaning in music? How do people make music meaningful? And what are the different ways that people create music to convey meaning? John Coltrane considered music an expression of "the whole of human experience." In this class, we will explore these kinds of questions and ideas through the lens of local music figures, both past and present, as well as our own unique experiences as listeners, consumers, and participants. Learning activities will inform students' thinking about the ways that musical meaning intersects with communities, individuals, and place, both at Warren Wilson as well as among its local and regional surroundings.

Instructor Bio: Kevin Kehrberg is bass player and musicologist who performs regularly throughout the region as well as nationally and internationally. He teaches courses in music and culture, and enjoys investigating folk songs and popular songs and how their meanings can change over time and place.

The Music of Poetry and the Poetry of Music

Michael Matin

This first-year seminar explores the interdisciplinary theme of The Music of Poetry and the Poetry of Music. We will explore the deep kinship between poetic language and musical "language," and we will also consider some of the fascinating research that connects these art

forms more broadly to the human experience. We will read works by a broad range of poets as well as listen to a variety of songs and musical pieces. There will also be opportunities for poets and musicians in the class to practice their craft and share their work. Readings include Oliver Sacks' *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and The Brain* and Daniel Levitin's *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*.

Instructor Bio: An English professor, Michael Matin teaches and writes about modern literature of Britain and the former territories of the British Empire. When not reading a novel or playing his piano, he enjoys spending time with his family and his dogs, Max and Ava.

Cracking the Creativity Crunch: Empowering our Learning through Discovery

Matt Vosler

This course will focus on empowering students through understanding how to best take advantage of their education and time at Warren Wilson College. The course will have three major components that are met to facilitate deeper learning and stronger bonds across campus. These three modules are: understanding how a traditional education can disenfranchise learners, how to develop your skills as a learner, how education can impact your mental health and what we can do about it.

Instructor Bio: Matt Vosler is a new professor here at Warren Wilson College in the Outdoor Leadership Department. Dr. Vosler has been working in outdoor education for over 15 years and has a passion for empowering others through education and focusing on developing the whole person.

Be A Changemaker

Wendy Seligmann

Do you wish you could make a difference in your community or even the world? Be A Changemaker will empower you with the confidence and knowledge you need to effect real change. We will approach our study and work through the lens of social entrepreneurship, which seeks to use business tools and markets creatively for social impact and creates innovative and resourceful approaches to addressing social problems. You will find all the inspiration and knowledge you need to start making a difference through social changemaker profiles, step-by-step exercises, and practical activities.

Working with a local organization, we will research ideas, build a team, and develop a plan that will create lasting positive change. Apply lessons from the business world to problems that need solving and become a savvy activist with valuable skills that will benefit you for a lifetime!

Instructor Bio: As Professor of Practice in Business, Wendy loves teaching courses that address, engage, and respond to current and emerging social responsibility issues (e.g., racial justice, food insecurity, and sustainability) through its curriculum and outreach activities. She heartily embraces the concept of the classroom as a "living laboratory," that is, an environment that fuels inquisitiveness, critical thinking, experimentation, and the effective application of course material. Whether she eats to exercise or exercises to eat (more!) is debatable but for fun Wendy enjoys experimenting with food and working out.

A Civil Right? From Math Anxiety to Math Literacy

Gretchen Whipple

This course is designed for students who wish to learn about math anxiety in order to help those who suffer from it, even if the afflicted person is you! In doing so, we will address some of the following questions: What makes something a civil right? What violates civil rights? Why was there a Civil Rights Movement in the 60's? What was it? What is math literacy? How is it connected to civil rights? Is math literacy a civil right? Should it be? What is math anxiety and how does it prevent math literacy? Students will explore these questions, and some of their own, by researching, reading, and discussing. Students will work with community partners to explore race relations and/or educational access.

Instructor Bio: An insatiable reader and a mathematician who loves to play in the dirt, Dr. Gretchen Whipple loves questions, loves exploring unknowns, and passionately wishes to improve everyone's attitudes about, as well as understanding of, mathematics.

Reading the Word and the World

Julie Wilson

Can reading be an act of social justice? What about reading a banned book, or reading more deeply on the topic of a viral social media post to investigate its accuracy? Some criticize reading as too passive as to be social change. On the other hand, engaging in a social movement without deep knowledge of an issue can be unsustainable. In this course, we will investigate the power of reading to deepen understanding and participation in social movements by exploring texts on topics such as climate change and racial justice. We will also meet with local community members about how reading shapes their lived experiences, and vice versa.

Instructor Bio: Dr. Julie Wilson grew up in Winston-Salem, NC, and is beginning her 15th year directing the Writing Studio at Warren Wilson. Recent books she has loved include Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Karen Russell's *Swamplandia*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*.

What Do We Know about Fossil Fuels and Energy?

Yuemei Zhang

Fossil fuels have made up at least 80% of total U.S. energy consumption for more than 100 years. What do we know about fossil fuels? How does the use of fossil fuels impact the environment? What do we use fossil fuels for besides as energy sources? Can we live without fossil fuels? In this first-year seminar, we explore the advantages and disadvantages of fossil fuels, and discuss ways to minimize the environmental impact caused by the use of fossil fuels. We also consider clean and renewable energy sources, as well as recycling and upcycling.

Instructor Bio: Yuemei Zhang is a physical chemist and materials scientist with an interest in the relationship between the arrangement of atoms in a chemical compound or material and its physical properties: the properties of a compound are determined by its constituent elements and its chemical structure. Besides teaching, Yuemei enjoys reading and hiking.