

Special Topics Course Descriptions
Summer 2025

UNDERGRADUATE

Full Summer

CJ 340 SL Women and Minorities in Criminal Justice (with Mark Beaudry)

This course takes a hard look at crime, justice, and the criminal justice system through the lens of bias, deviance, inequality, inclusion, minorities, sexuality, and their intersections. Dialogue about minorities in criminal justice is currently one of the most talked about issues in a variety of social spaces. It examines such topics as inclusion of women, inequality of minorities by profession, use of force, implicit bias, delinquency, women in prisons, domestic violence, LGBTQ+, women in cybersecurity, and women in leadership. The course provides a panoramic view of current issues affecting women and minorities in various stages of the criminal justice system.

CJ 340 SL2 Mental Health and Criminal Justice (with Francis Olive)

This course explores the relationship of mental illness to crime and violence as well as the policies and programs concerning the treatment of adults with mental illness in the criminal justice system. The course first examines the categories of “serious” mental disorder as defined by psychiatry. It then explores criminal justice implications of mental disorders by examining the relationship between mental disorder and criminal offending; and how law enforcement, the courts, and correctional systems respond to persons with mental disorders. The course also explores the relationships between mental health treatment systems and the criminal justice system and looks at mental health issues among criminal justice system practitioners.

Summer I

BI 401 BL Behavioral Ecology (with Steven Oliver)

Behavioral Ecology is the study of how animals respond to their environments, primarily through the lens of evolutionary biology. Lectures are based on the foundational principles of the subject, and labs are field-based applications of techniques. The prerequisite for the course is BI 202 OR PB 200. Suitable as an upper-level elective for biology (Organismal) and the Psychobiology minor.

CJ 340 AL Cyber Intelligence (with Mark Beaudry)

Students identify and apply cyber intelligence methodologies of the global cyberthreat environment. Students focus on criminal behavior, hacker culture, and nation state geopolitical aspects of cyberthreats. Students will conduct analysis of a contemporary topic, exploring cyberthreats in a specific domain to create a cyber intelligence report that integrates the concepts covered in this course.

EN 450 AL Massachusetts Memoirs (with Heather Treseler)

Massachusetts has been a hive of literary activity since its beginnings, and it remains one of the most educated, literate, and literary states in the nation. This course focuses on memoirs by writers who have written about their lives in Massachusetts and featured its settings in their accounts. Thus, we will consider how the particularities of place—as well as class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religious belief—shape representations of identity in the work of contemporary writers Danzy Senna (*Where Did You Sleep Last Night?*), Isaac Fitzgerald (*Dirtbag, Massachusetts*), Augusten Burroughs (*Running with Scissors*), Caroline Knapp (*Pack of Two*), and Michael Patrick Fitzgerald (*All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*). We will also consider excerpts from twentieth-century narratives by Malcolm X (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*), Miriam Levine (*Devotion*), and Elizabeth Bishop (“The Country Mouse”) that focus on writers’ experiences of Boston and Worcester.

The course includes weekly written lectures and discussion prompts; journaling; a discussion board (of more formal responses); and a final paper. Graduate students will consider theories of autobiographical writing in auxiliary readings and write a seminar length paper. The instructor offers weekly optional Zoom cafes for additional discussion of the readings and course assignments.

HI 250 AL History of Violence and Torture (with Michael Gesin)

Throughout history, violence and torture has been used for multiple purposes: as a mechanism within formal legal systems, as a tool to control the lower classes, and as a covert tactic that has survived even when its practice has been contested or outlawed. Today, most democratic countries have outlawed torture and outwardly condemn it. However, even “civilized” states that denounce violence and torture widely practice it. In the past decade, torture has become part of the public discourse. Scholars are also increasingly studying the phenomena, particularly in the context of counterterrorism. This course will discuss the history of violence, torture and physical punishment, changes in the practice over time, and the problem of torture today.

SO 199 EA Sociology of Hip Hop (with Domingo Guyton)

Contact the instructor for course description.

Summer II

BA 482 PL AI and Business Management (with Don Vescio)

This course explores practical applications of AI in business, from small startups to large organizations. It prepares students for today’s workplace by demonstrating how AI enhances efficiency, decision-making, and innovation across industries. Designed for emerging professionals and those seeking to boost their business skills, the course examines AI’s impact on operations and strategy. Students will complete a final project outlining an AI strategy for a business of their choice.

BI 401 PL Statistics for Biologists (with Sebastian Velez)

Introduction to statistical methods in the biological sciences. Topics include descriptive statistics, probability distributions, hypothesis testing, confidence intervals, regression analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Students will learn to apply statistical techniques to real-world biological data. Emphasis is placed on interpretation and communication of results.

CJ 340 PL Cyberwarfare (with Mark Beaudry)

This course will focus on the cyberwarfare landscape, offensive and defensive techniques, and the future of cyberwarfare. It also addresses military, local, state, and federal agency tactical and strategic capabilities of cyberwarfare, intelligence operations, and related laws and ethics. Students will learn how to identify and analyze threats, attacks, and vulnerabilities, in order to create appropriate mitigation strategies.

CJ 340 PL2 Juvenile Delinquency (with Francis Olive)

This course will provide an introduction, overview, and examination of juvenile delinquency and the juvenile justice system. The course will cover theories of delinquency, analysis of the juvenile justice system, and focus on problems of co-offending and patterns of youth crimes. We will learn several major theories of delinquency and apply these to delinquency today. We will explore juvenile delinquency from a broad perspective that examines youth cultures, music/style, status offenses, and crime; and consider delinquency in its historical, structural, cultural, and political dimensions. We will study the creation, operation, and reform of the juvenile justice system in the United States, not only as systems of social control, but also as social constructions that reflect dominant images of youth and the place of youth in society.

EN 450 PL Contemporary Irish Poetry (with Heather Treseler)

This course will focus on the works of four major Irish poets—since W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922—whose influences have extended beyond Ireland to inspire other poets writing in the wake of colonialism.

After a brief overview of Yeats's work, we will study poems and essays by Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, Michael Longley, and Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, investigating the strategies and modes these poets employ to write about various aspects of Irish culture to include this island nation's rich literary tradition as well as the legacy of British colonialism, religious and Celtic mythologies, agrarian and urban landscapes, and gender politics.

The course includes weekly written lectures and discussion prompts; journaling; a discussion board (of more formal responses); and a final paper. Graduate students will be responsible for auxiliary readings in Irish literary history and will write a seminar length paper. The instructor offers weekly optional Zoom cafes for additional discussion of the readings and course assignments.

HE 400 PL Infectious Disease Epidemiology (with Elinor Fondell)

In this course, general principles of the epidemiology of infectious diseases, including COVID-19, will be covered. The students will discuss the ways in which infectious diseases are classified, their basic epidemiologic characteristics, and how the system of surveillance of infectious diseases works.

HI 250 PL Wilderness, Parks & Forests (with Joshua Koenig)

This course focuses on the evolving relationship between nature and American society, emphasizing the social, cultural, and political forces that have influenced protection of parks, forests, and wilderness. Students will develop an appreciation of the changing cultural meanings of nature, and the environmental ethics of wilderness protection and management.

HI 450 PL What They Wore (with Charlotte Haller)

Using the material culture of clothing, this course will explore how clothes reveal and shaped the histories of gender, sexuality, commerce, industry, globalization, politics, race, and immigration in the United States.

SO 299 PL Soc Imagntn Grey's Anatomy (with Cara Powers)

How does Grey's Anatomy and the Shonda Rhimes universe impact our ideas of issues that impact our lives and our ability to take action on those issues? We'll watch and analyze episodes of Grey's and other Rhimes programs, as well as read companion literature and analyze the role of media on sociology.

GRADUATE

Full Summer

BI 980 FS Small Molecule Drug Discovery and Development (with Weichu Xu)

This course provides an overview of the scientific and regulatory aspects of small molecule drug development from discovery to market. This course will be taught in a lecture/seminar/discussion format. Students will be encouraged to search and use peer reviewed publications to get the answer to the questions. The course will allow students to gain an appreciation of the varied aspects in researching, producing and marketing pharmaceuticals. Lecturers (including invited speakers from biotech/pharmaceutical companies) will provide expertise on a range of topics, particularly drug target validation, hit to lead, preclinical studies (PK/PD). If time permits, Formulation, cGMP and clinical trials will also be introduced.

MT 971 BL Equity Data Analysis in the Math Classroom (with Mary Fowler)

Contact the instructor for course description.

Summer I

EN 998 AL Science Fiction (with Don Vescio)

Science fiction has often been dismissed as pulp fiction—flashy covers, far-fetched stories, and a reputation for appealing to a narrow audience. But beneath the surface, sci-fi has a rich literary tradition that stretches from ancient myths to modern speculative fiction. From Frankenstein to The Matrix, sci-fi has always asked big questions: What makes us human? How do we define reality? What are the consequences of technological advancement?

This course explores key works of science fiction, with a focus on short stories that showcase the genre's most influential themes and subgenres. We'll examine how sci-fi has evolved from early modern works to contemporary narratives,

shifting from scientific speculation to deeper explorations of identity, society, and power. Along the way, we'll discuss issues like race and representation, alternate histories, gender and AI, and the ways sci-fi reflects and challenges our world today.

Through our readings and discussions, we'll map out what makes science fiction distinct and consider its role in shaping cultural conversations. Whether you're a longtime fan or new to the genre, this course will give you tools to analyze and appreciate the limitless possibilities of science fiction.

EN 998 AL2 Creative Writing, Poetry I (with Heather Treseler)

“Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought,” wrote Audre Lorde, suggesting that poetry is often composed in the borderlands of experience, imagination, and language. This workshop class focuses on generating original poems to give expression to what, for each of us, might otherwise remain unwritten.

Each week, we will study and annotate two of “Twelve Great Hits” in American poetry to include poems by Chen Chen, Martin Espada, Joy Harjo, Carmen Giménez Smith, Frank Bidart, and Lisel Mueller. We will also compose and revise an original poem of our own making each week, and offer critiques to classmates' poems. Experimenting with the main modes and forms of poetry, we will add to our creative toolbox and knowledge of the genre.

The class meets asynchronously online and all poems are available in a free course packet and on the Poetry Foundation website. Graduate students will complete auxiliary readings in craft and lyric theory, and all students will receive guidance on preparing their work for performance and publication—in literary journals and with book presses. While no previous experience with poetry is required, students should enjoy reading poems, writing creatively, and collaborating with peers.

EN 998 AL3 Advanced Memoir Writing (with Elizabeth Bidinger)

This course is designed to acquaint you with the fascinating literary genre of memoir. It will expose you to a variety of approaches to life-writing and familiarize you with elements of effective autobiographical prose. It will also provide you with opportunities to practice the craft, share your work, and receive feedback.

EN 998 AL4 Massachusetts Memoirs (with Heather Treseler)

Massachusetts has been a hive of literary activity since its beginnings, and it remains one of the most educated, literate, and literary states in the nation. This course focuses on memoirs by writers who have written about their lives in Massachusetts and featured its settings in their accounts. Thus, we will consider how the particularities of place—as well as class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religious belief—shape representations of identity in the work of contemporary writers Danzy Senna (*Where Did You Sleep Last Night?*), Isaac Fitzgerald (*Dirtbag, Massachusetts*), Augusten Burroughs (*Running with Scissors*), Caroline Knapp (*Pack of Two*), and Michael Patrick Fitzgerald (*All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*). We will also consider excerpts from twentieth-century narratives by Malcolm X (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*), Miriam Levine (*Devotion*), and Elizabeth Bishop (“The Country Mouse”) that focus on writers' experiences of Boston and Worcester.

The course includes weekly written lectures and discussion prompts; journaling; a discussion board (of more formal responses); and a final paper. Graduate students will consider theories of autobiographical writing in auxiliary readings and write a seminar length paper. The instructor offers weekly optional Zoom cafes for additional discussion of the readings and course assignments.

EN 998 AL5 Advanced Practices in Writing: Journal Writing (with Elizabeth Bidinger)

This course explores the art and practice of journal writing as a tool for self-expression, creativity, and personal growth. Students will examine various journaling techniques, including reflective writing, dialogue, lists, unsent letters, and stream-of-consciousness entries. Emphasizing both personal and academic applications, the course will help students develop a consistent writing practice while engaging with theories of autobiographical writing and expressive arts.

Graduate students will undertake additional assignments that involve critical analysis of journaling methodologies and their applications in therapeutic, literary, or research contexts. Through a combination of readings, discussions, and writing exercises, students will gain a deeper understanding of how journaling can be used for self-discovery, problem-solving, and creative exploration. No prior journaling experience is required.

HI 990 AL History of Violence and Torture (with Michael Gesin)

Throughout history, violence and torture has been used for multiple purposes: as a mechanism within formal legal systems, as a tool to control the lower classes, and as a covert tactic that has survived even when its practice has been contested or outlawed. Today, most democratic countries have outlawed torture and outwardly condemn it. However, even “civilized” states that denounce violence and torture widely practice it. In the past decade, torture has become part of the public discourse. Scholars are also increasingly studying the phenomena, particularly in the context of counterterrorism. This course will discuss the history of violence, torture and physical punishment, changes in the practice over time, and the problem of torture today.

Summer II

BI 980 PL Biostatistics with R (with Sebastian Velez)

Introduction to Biostatistics using the R programming language for hypothesis-testing, and the analysis and visualization of biological data. The R programming language is the de-facto standard for statistical analysis in the sciences, and the production of publication-ready plots. In this course, students will work with real-world datasets from the fields of ecology, public health, medicine and molecular biology. No previous computer programming experience is required. Online asynchronous lectures with weekly coding assignments.

CD 987 EP Tracheostomy (with Erin Kearney)

Contact the instructor for course description.

CD 987 EQ Pediatric Feeding (with Laura Melnick)

Contact the instructor for course description.

ED 971 BL Teaching in Kenya (with Christina Kaniu)

Students enrolled in this course will travel to Kenya to explore Kenyan culture, learn about instructional strategies used in Kenya, and work with young Kenyan students in a library setting while practicing instructional strategies for teaching literacy and other subjects. Prior to traveling to Kenya, groups of students will design lessons for literacy sessions to be held at a local library in Ol Kalou, Kenya. Once in Kenya, students will instruct young Kenyan students at the library. There may also be opportunities to visit a local school and interact with Kenyan teachers in order to learn about the culture of Kenyan schools.

EN 998 PL Creative Writing, Poetry II (with Heather Treseler)

How can we write compelling poems that achieve, as the poet Ellen Bryant Voigt observes, not only the *transcription* of experience but the *transformation* of it? This course focuses on how contemporary poets use narrative, sonics, and the architecture of the page to create compelling collections of poetry: books that draw us in and keep us engaged, poem to poem, as the poet creates a world from crafted language, memorable imagery, and sounds. The best collections of poetry seize our attention, draw us into their emotional cruxes, and leave us changed.

In this course, we will draft our own poems weekly, experimenting with different modes, allowing ourselves to play—with serious intention—with all the tools in a poet’s toolbox. Along the way, we will study three collections of contemporary poetry, using these authors’ examples to inform our own experimentation and development.

By the end of the course, each student will have written at least fifteen poems and organized some of those poems into a chapbook length manuscript (12-24 pages). Students will also write short essay introductions to their chapbooks. Please note that EN 260 and an extensive knowledge of poetry are not prerequisites for this course, but students should have an abiding interest in creative writing.

EN 998 PL2 Contemporary Irish Poetry (with Heather Treseler)

This course will focus on the works of four major Irish poets—since W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922—whose influences have extended beyond Ireland to inspire other poets writing in the wake of colonialism.

After a brief overview of Yeats’s work, we will study poems and essays by Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, Michael Longley, and Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, investigating the strategies and modes these poets employ to write about various

aspects of Irish culture to include this island nation's rich literary tradition as well as the legacy of British colonialism, religious and Celtic mythologies, agrarian and urban landscapes, and gender politics.

The course includes weekly written lectures and discussion prompts; journaling; a discussion board (of more formal responses); and a final paper. Graduate students will be responsible for auxiliary readings in Irish literary history and will write a seminar length paper. The instructor offers weekly optional Zoom cafes for additional discussion of the readings and course assignments.

EN 998 PL3 Advanced Fiction Writing (with Elizabeth Bidinger)

In-depth study of the essential elements of prose fiction, including plot, scene-building and character development. Readings include expert advice on craft as well as professional works of fiction. Exercises to stimulate ideas and practice skills, culminating in each student's composition of an original short story (or novel chapter).

EN 998 PL4 Writing For Digital Environments (with Don Vescio)

The ways we write, publish, and read are rapidly changing as digital tools and technologies reshape communication. This course examines contemporary approaches to writing in digital spaces, focusing on how emerging platforms and tools influence storytelling, audience engagement, and the publishing process.

We will explore digital-first writing strategies, multimodal composition, and interactive content, as well as the ethical and rhetorical considerations of publishing in online environments. Topics include content design, user experience, evolving writing conventions, and the role of digital tools in shaping creative and professional communication.

Through hands-on projects, students will experiment with different digital writing formats—such as blogs, social media, multimedia narratives, and digital publishing platforms—to develop adaptable writing skills for today's digital communication spaces. By the end of the course, students will gain a deeper understanding of how to produce compelling digital content and navigate evolving publication models within modern communication technologies.

HI 990 PL Modern Latin America (with Aldo Garcia-Guevara)

This course will introduce students to the economic, cultural, social and political events that shaped Latin America from the wars for independence in the 1810s and 1820s, to the present. The course explicitly compares the experiences of people in different regions of the Americas, and will emphasize the lives of ordinary people as they face constraints and opportunities based on structures of political and economic power. We will particularly explore how constructions of race, class and gender affected the lives of Latin Americans.

In order to help the student better understand the “making” of history, the course will make use of primary documents, visual images, film, and literature. Readings and films will provide various interpretations of Modern Latin American history, and students will practice thinking, reading and writing critically and effectively. The ultimate goal is to examine competing historical interpretations, understand them, and evaluate them.

Graduate students will be responsible for additional readings, will be expected to integrate these additional sources and deeper levels of analysis, and will complete a more robust, in terms of breadth and depth, final paper which can be a term or research paper, and/or focus on historiography.

HI 990 PL2 Wilderness, Parks & Forests (with Joshua Koenig)

This course focuses on the evolving relationship between nature and American society, emphasizing the social, cultural, and political forces that have influenced protection of parks, forests, and wilderness. Students will develop an appreciation of the changing cultural meanings of nature, and the environmental ethics of wilderness protection and management.

HI 990 PL3 What They Wore (with Charlotte Haller)

Using the material culture of clothing, this course will explore how clothes reveal and shaped the histories of gender, sexuality, commerce, industry, globalization, politics, race, and immigration in the United States.

SP 934 PL Domestic Labor & Care Work in Lat Amer Cinema (with Elizabeth Osborne)

Since 2000, Latin American cinema has produced a number of films—fiction and documentary as well as feature-length and short—that focus on the figures of domestic servants and how they negotiate power within the household. Due to the

traditional gendered division of labor in Latin America that relegates women to performing often un(der)paid domestic labor and care work, we will examine films that question the historical marginalization of female domestic workers by making these women the center of the narratives, their families, and society. In addition, a small number of films will consider the role of male domestic labor and/or care work, whether paid or unpaid, to complement and extend the conversation surrounding domestic work in Latin America. Each week of the course will focus on a pair of films placed into dialogue with each other to consider the ways in which cinematic representations of workers may respond to current economic, social, political and/or cultural anxieties and tensions related to gender and labor. Assignments and assessments will consist of analyses based on critical thinking and close reading, as well as the creation and design of pedagogical materials for teaching films from the class. This course will be conducted entirely in Spanish.