

Curry College General Education Department

First Year Inquiry Offerings: Spring 2025

FYI: Living Sustainably in the 21st Century: Bringing it All Home (GEN 1000-8; Mike Foster)

This course will explore the 21st century challenge of creating a sustainable world with a focus on family and home. Homes today are designed and constructed using a dizzying array of new and revolutionary technologies, but the idea of creating dwellings that are simple, efficient, and economical dates back to the beginning of time. Working individually and as part of a team, students will examine the environmental, political, and economic housing challenges that face us at global, national, and regional levels. We will discover the opportunities and problems that sustainable homesteading offers from a variety of perspectives, including psychology, art and architecture, science and technology, food and ecology, and the law.

FYI: Happiness (GEN 1000-6; Jeannette DeJong)

What is happiness? Can one find happiness or is it an illusion? How do health, wealth, education, and justice relate to happiness? Can individuals do anything to increase happiness or is the pursuit of happiness self-defeating? Does happiness depend on relationships with others? Should governments try to increase happiness? These are among the questions we will explore as we examine ideas of happiness over time and in various places.

FYI: Earth 2045 (GEN 1000-5; Alan Revering)

What will our world look like in 20 years? How will new technologies change our social relationships, the jobs we expect to hold, and even our bodies? In this inquiry class, we will look back to see how a single technology has sometimes transformed the world (automobiles, phones, the internet), and look ahead to see if we can identify the new technologies that will revolutionize the world of 2044: self-driving cars? children picked from a genetic menu? human settlements on Mars? climate disasters? What will this mean for our society, our ethics, our economy, and our very sense of what it means to be human?

FYI: Food (GEN 1000-4; Jennifer Hart)

What do you know about food? Seriously? We all usually engage with food, in some way, every day but how much thought have you given to food as a topic?

In this class food will be our topic. We will ask questions about the connections between food and identity. We will find information about food insecurity. We will develop knowledge about the ethics of food. And we will share our knowledge about all these food related things with others. We will do all of this because this is also a class about being a college level thinker. We will use food—learning about food—as a way to practice being college level thinkers and to practice all the skills that go along with college level thinking.

FYI: Legacies (GEN 1000-2; GEN 1000-3; GEN 1000-9 Ryan Theroux)

Every day is an opportunity for us to shape or build upon our legacy. As you begin your college journey, it may be helpful to ask what role a college education might play in creating your own legacy. Why, as a society, do we recognize and debate the legacies of some individuals (i.e. celebrities, politicians, athletes) but not others (i.e. teachers, nurses, helpers)? Why are the lives of some individuals who have made incredible contributions to the world overlooked (i.e. think sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, generation)? These are a few of the questions our class will consider and inquire about through discussions, readings, freewriting, and more.

FYI: Exploring Art and Design (GEN 1000-1; Chris McCusker)

I am immersed in all things related to art and design – and I hope I can share that excitement with you. We will explore modern art with the purpose of learning about prominent artists and their craft. Art is subjective - so we will not try to “like” the art, but rather to appreciate the artists, their messages, and their contributions. Special focus will be on the street art movement of the 1980s. This is followed by a study of commercial design and advertising from the 1950s to the current day. We will gain an understanding of the psychology and methods of the marketing process. This will include the creation of our own product and a creative marketing campaign. Finally, we will research a series of artists and designers and present our findings, write a paper on their specific contributions to their field and create a simple website to showcase their creative work.

FYI: Animals: Friends, Foes, or Food (GEN 1000-10; Julia Sloan)

From our fur babies to four-legged social media sensations to our dinner plates, animals impact our lives in significant ways.

- There are over 190 million pets in the US whose owners spent \$147 billion on them last year
- There were 89 million cows and 9 billion chickens in the US last year
- The US poultry industry generates \$417 billion and employs 1.5 million people
- In 2015 approximately 15% of internet activity worldwide was about cats and since then there have been 6.5 billion cat pictures posted online

Our relationships with animals say much about what it means to be human, what different cultures value, and how societies function. Artists, authors, and philosophers from the ancient human past to the present day have been fascinated with animals and their roles in our lives. Livestock industries are an important part of the global economy and food production is a worse contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions than transportation. Animals play important roles in public health and medicine and their health can often have direct impacts on ours. There is an academic journal published by a University in Sweden devoted entirely to the subject of animals and politics. And of course, if you've met Graham or seen pictures of him, you know that Curry College has its very own therapy puppy because the mental health benefits of spending time with animals are well known. This course will explore each of these aspects of the relationships between people and animals and more.

So, animal lover or not, if you're interested in economics, the environment, the arts, philosophy, history, health and medicine, politics, or therapy there is something here for you. We will learn about each of these subjects by exploring what they can tell us about the relationship between people and animals.

FYI: Kaleidoscope of Identity (GEN 1000-12; Vicki Nelson)

How do we uncover, discover, and recover our own individual identities? What influences the development of the unique voice we each have? How do family, country of origin, religion, race, and gender impact this process of the kaleidoscope of identity? In this inquiry class we will explore cultural perspectives, developmental theories, and communication choices. Our approach to these huge questions will be creative – weaving together films, art, short stories, poetry, music to help us question assumptions and articulate a sense of our core values and beliefs.

FYI: Reality TV & Relationships (GEN 1000-13; Colby Zongol)

If you've ever watched reality TV, this class is for you! In this class, we will not only be entertained by a reality television show, but we will also take some time to think about the ways relationships of all sorts – romantic, platonic, cohabitating, etc. – are portrayed in the show, discuss what that might be subconsciously teaching us about relationships, and think about how we can “do” our own relationships better!

FYI: Space Travel Past & Future (GEN 1000-7; Bill Nancarrow)

Since the earliest recorded history, humanity has looked to the sky and imagined what was out there. Over the past 125 years, we have gone beyond imagination to understanding and even experience, setting foot on another heavenly body and reaching back to see within 380,000 years of the Big Bang. This course will blend imagination with reality, look to the wonder of space, the history and science of space travel, current initiatives in space travel, and a future that brings us back to imagination.

FYI: Conspiracy Theories (GEN 1000-11; Nathan Lanning)

Ever since the CIA coined the term conspiracy theory in 1967 to discredit those who knew the truth behind the Kennedy assassination, conspiracy theories have captured the American imagination. This seminar will examine the truth behind popular conspiracy theories including the moon landing hoax, the story of Atlantis, the reasons behind our fear of ghosts, why we believe mermaids exist, and explore the human traits that make us susceptible to conspiratorial thinking. In-class activities, group discussion, and active learning are the focus of this class where students will learn how to overcome common fallacies and evaluate their own cognitive bias. We'll test our critical thinking skills on classic conspiracy theories and modern Fake News, culminating with constructing some conspiracy theories of our own.