

Bard College Seminar

Seminar Sequence

The Seminar Sequence is the signature humanities experience of the Bard Early College program. The four-semester interdisciplinary Seminar Sequence exposes students to seminal texts from antiquity to modernity, which students engage with through critical reading and interpretation. Readings include Plato's Republic, Dante's Inferno, Machiavelli's The Prince, Shakespeare's The Tempest, Goethe's Faust, Darwin's The Origin of Species, Marx's The Communist Manifesto, Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents, Forster's A Passage to India, Woolf's To the Lighthouse, Kafka's The Trial, and Frayn's Copenhagen, among others. The Seminar Sequence is modeled on Bard College's great books course, First-Year Seminar.

BARD005 College Year 1 Seminar I

This course interrogates the origins of civilization in the Mediterranean region by exploring a wide variety of primary sources from the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and Islamic cultures. Drawn from antiquity through the 15th century, the course materials encompass a wide variety of media, including fragmented and intact written texts; architectural structures, sculptures, paintings, and other visual representations; musical selections; and recited sacred and secular texts. Writing-intensive in nature, this course helps students discover what they themselves think about the materials and situate their views in relation to those of their classmates. The key skills developed in this course are critical reading, including the "reading" of non-textual materials, and written and oral expression of ideas gained from such reading.

BARD006 College Year 1 Seminar II

This course centers on changes in the nature of knowledge and knowing, as various revolutions—the Scientific Revolution, political revolutions (American, French, and others), the Industrial Revolution—swept the world. Initially centered in Europe, the geographic range expands into the New World as the notion of Western civilization changes with the colonization of the Western Hemisphere. Drawn from the 16th century through the mid-19th century, course materials present the theories of the era and their manifestations in a wide range of forms, including poetry, drama, autobiography, and the novel; sacred hymns and secular opera; and paintings, photographs, and other forms of visual expression. Students also investigate critical secondary articles in conjunction with the primary sources. Building upon Year 1 Seminar I, students in this writing-intensive course work to raise their skills of critical reading, thinking, writing, and discussion to greater levels of complexity and sophistication.

BARD007 College Year 2 Seminar I

This course explores the development of key ideas central to the way we think about modernity. It focuses on the ways in which a diverse range of 19th- and early 20th-century thinkers both shaped and challenged the shape of the emerging modern world. Through rigorous study of evocative novels and works of political, social and psychoanalytic theory, the seminar asks students to think and write critically about concepts that have revolutionized the world in the last 150 years and continue to provide the framework for vital contemporary debates. In a time when diasporas blur boundaries in national identity, this course expands from earlier geographic notions of Western civilization toward a more global, international outlook. Through intensive reading of primary materials, in conjunction with related readings in secondary sources, students learn to read sources critically at varying speeds, in relation to their intended purposes for the materials. In so doing, students raise their skills of critical thinking to ever higher levels.

BARD008 College Year 2 Seminar II

In this course, students explore the contemporary culture of uncertainty through an exploration of twentieth century texts in diverse disciplines, culminating in a research and writing project inquiring deeply into the controversial ideas of one contemporary writer. By the early twentieth century, increasing awareness of the limitations of human knowledge complicated the nineteenth-century conceptions of, and faith in, science and progress. The twentieth century's global wars, genocidal destruction, threats of nuclear annihilation and environmental degradation, mass population displacements and increasing globalization have turned

modernism's skepticism into postmodern uncertainty. Developments and discoveries in the physical sciences—and in Quantum Theory, in particular—upset the standard conception of the universe as knowable, revealing instead a world dominated by chance and complexity. Through intensive critical reading, thinking, and writing, students are encouraged to discover how principles of uncertainty can facilitate thinking about the complex, global world of our new century and their place in it.