

# Bard Sequence

## Seminar Course Descriptions

### **SEM 101 First Year Seminar I** (3 credits)

This course launches the core of the Bard Sequence by introducing students to the skills that are the basis for most college work: close reading and annotating challenging texts, creating substantive, polished analytical writing, and participating in a student-run seminar discussion. The first year of Seminar takes on the question, “What does it mean to be human?” Students begin the semester by using Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time* as a way of framing and understanding their engagement with canonical texts that are at times philosophically or culturally recognizable and at other times radically, thought-provokingly distant. From here they embark on a journey through thematic units including Eros (featuring texts such as Sappho’s poetry, Plato’s *Symposium*, and Jenkins’ film *Moonlight*), Explorations and Encounters (Homer’s *Odyssey*, Walcott’s *Omeros*), and Resistance (Doerries/Sophocles’ *Antigone in Ferguson*). Throughout the semester, students practice short and longer-form writing about these texts, drawing upon methods introduced in the Writing and Thinking Workshop. Using these and other texts as a basis for writing and discussion, they practice the core skills of critical thinking and the effective articulation of ideas.

### **SEM 102 First Year Seminar II** (3 credits)

This course continues the Sequence’s examination of foundational texts in conversation around key thematic questions. In the second semester, the thematic units include Beginnings and Redemptions (looking at the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, *Qu’ran*, the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and other “genesis” stories), Journeys Into the Self (Dante’s *Inferno*, Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth*), and finally, Power and Doubt (Machiavelli’s *The Prince* with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*). As in the first semester, the course is designed to develop students’ ability to respond critically and creatively to these texts through close reading, active discussion and reflective writing. Students will continue to examine the role of power, gender, race, and sexuality in the construction of identity, building upon what they have encountered in the first semester to draw these ideas into increasingly sophisticated writing projects and class discussions, with the expectation being that all students will feel confident and well-versed in seminar discussion and academic writing by the end of this first year.

### **SEM 201 Sophomore Seminar I (3 credits)**

This second year of the Bard Sequence explores the development of ideas that are central to the way we think about modernity. Throughout, it asks the question: What does it mean to exist within the multiple, diverse perspectives on humanness that modernity reveals and emphasizes? Beginning with texts that take on this question directly -- Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* -- Second Year Seminar expands upon the themes introduced in the first half of the Sequence through the literary and philosophical texts of the past two centuries. If the first half of Sequence modelled the ways in which scholarly conversations arise around such themes, the second half emphasizes ever more broadly how students might enter into and forge these conversations themselves. In the first semester of the course, students consider Class Conflict (setting Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto* alongside Bong Joon Ho's *Parasite*), Consciousness and Its Discontents (Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*), and Revolutions (du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*). As in the first half of Sequence, students reflect upon these and other readings through annotation, discussion, and critical writing exercises, with increasing independence.

### **SEM 202 Sophomore Seminar II (3 credits)**

The final semester of Seminar is split into two parts, with the first half continuing the course's text-based discussion and the second half focusing on the culmination of students' work in Sequence: the Inquiry Project. Throughout the first half of the semester, students address themes such as Violence and Justice (Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*) and Feminist Interventions (Morrison's *Sula* alongside theoretical works by Adichie, Butler, Walker, Gay, and others). If time allows, students may elect to add in texts that interest them, including graphic novels or contemporary drama. The final half of this semester turns students' attention entirely toward their Inquiry Project, in which they synthesize and reflect upon all that they have learned in Sequence by devising, carrying out, revising, and presenting an original research project of their choosing.