

# THE FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM

## Enduring Questions and Urgent Questions

The **Enduring Questions Seminar** (UCS 10101) and **Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar** (UCS 20201) are the introduction to and an integral part of Hiram's Urgent Challenges Curriculum and are a requirement for graduation. Students who do not complete the two-course sequence with passing grades will result in an incomplete graduation status and will require the successful completion a section of UCS 10100 or UCS 20201 for each course not completed, or the completion of another appropriate writing equivalency approved by the associate dean of the college and/or the Writing Across the Curriculum director. Courses used to satisfy the UCS requirement may not be used to satisfy other core requirements of the College.

New first-year students will take the Enduring Questions Seminar UCS 10101 FIRST-YEAR ENDURING QUESTIONS. Students with appropriate transfer credits will complete UCS 20201 ADDRESSING URGENT QUESTIONS in place of an Enduring Questions Seminar.

Due to the high-contact nature and group work aspects of the UCS 10101 FIRST-YEAR ENDURING QUESTIONS, students in College Credit Plus or online programs complete the more composition-focused WRIT 15100 COMPOSITION IN THE LIB ARTS I in place of the Enduring Questions Seminar.

## A. Enduring Questions Seminar\* (4 credits)

**UCS 10101: FIRST-YEAR ENDURING QUESTIONS: 4 Hour(s)**

UCS 10101: FIRST-YEAR ENDURING QUESTIONS ~ First-Year Enduring Questions Seminar. The Enduring Questions Seminar is designed to provide an exposure to college-level intellectual inquiry through critical reading, in-depth discussion, oral presentations, and informal and formal writing. Each course is centered on a fundamental enduring question, theme, or topic such as "What is Justice?" or "What is a Life Well-Lived?" Through the careful and considerate examination of the course topic, students will develop their ability to write well; to think critically; to communicate clearly; to read, interpret, and engage with relevant texts; and to identify, evaluate, and use research appropriately. As a part of their Enduring Questions Seminar, students will also participate in the Common Questions Hour, a common intellectual experience with all first-year students. Grounded in the common reading and the ethics theme, the Common Questions Hour will consist of lectures, discussions, reflections, and group activities engaging everything from the curricular, the co-curricular, and the practical. Furthermore, presenters and discussions will introduce the five Cs of Hiram Connect: Curriculum, Career, Calling, Character and Community. Students in all sections will be required to complete and be prepared to thoughtfully discuss all course readings, to give at least one oral presentation, to maintain and develop an ePortfolio, to reflect on their learning regularly, and to write at least three projects or essays—culminating in a signature assignment—totaling at least 5,000 words of formal, revised written work. This course aligns with the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) requirements for English Composition: First Writing Course (TME 001).

**WRIT 15100: COMPOSITION IN THE LIB ARTS I: 4 Hour(s)**

COMPOSITION IN THE LIBERAL ARTS I ~ Course Description:

Composition in the Liberal Arts I is an introductory course designed to provide an exposure to college-level intellectual inquiry through critical reading, in-depth discussion, oral presentations, and informal and formal writing. Each course is centered on an enduring question, theme, or topic fundamental to understanding and living. Through the careful and considerate examination of the course topic, students will develop their ability to do the following: • Write, including understanding purpose, audience, and the importance of the writing process. • Read, interpret, and connect relevant information, texts, and experiences. • Think critically • Communicate orally: students will speak, participate in discussion, and present ideas • Identify, evaluate, and use information appropriate for scholarly research. Students will be required to complete and be prepared to discuss thoughtfully all course readings, to give at least one oral presentation, and to write at least three written projects—with at least one including research—totaling at least 5,000 words formal and revised written work. This course is designed to satisfy the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) requirements for English Composition: First Writing Course (TME 001).

## SELECT EXAMPLES OF ENDURING QUESTIONS SEMINARS (UCS 10101) OFFERED

### Is Government Necessary?

Is it possible for human communities to function effectively without an official government? This question has been explored by political philosophers for thousands of years, and in our current era, when anarchist tendencies are becoming ever more prevalent, it is more relevant than ever to consider the nature and potential of anarchist social arrangements. In this course, therefore, we will explore the ideas of major anarchist theorists and the methods of famous anarchist experiments. We will also spend quite a lot of time examining how anarchist principles are underpinning many of the social, economic, technological, and cultural trends of the present day.

### Freak, Gimp Crazy, Crip: Who is normal?

Who is normal? Is there such a thing, and how has the concept of "normalcy" marginalized those who seem atypical and unexpected? "Freak," "Gimp," "Crazy," "Crip," are terms of disparagement that mark the stigmatized and contribute to ableism or disability prejudice. Yet, some have reclaimed these words as reflections of group pride, disability identity and the broader culture of "queer". To stimulate critical thinking about ourselves in relation to others and society, this course untangles the complexities involved in what it means to be human, healthy, and valued. We will focus on the enduring question of who is normal to examine the social determinants of disability, and the dynamics of life for people who deviate from the norm. Classic and contemporary readings will explore the social psychology of stigma, the politics of difference and progress toward social change in addition to current controversies in genetic testing and transhumanism.

### How Do We Fight Injustice?

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle." How can we most effectively struggle against injustice and work for positive change? To answer this, students in the class will explore various movements for social justice in the American past, beginning with the movement to abolish slavery. The class will consider what strategies and tactics brought success and why. Each student will research a chosen social change movement to discern and evaluate what motivated the activists,

what strategies they used, and whether and how they achieved their goals. Students will consider how in their own lives they wish to fight injustice.

### What is Profit?

This course will explore the concept of company profit and how it relates to the business owners, company employees and society at large. We will discuss what profit is and if businesses need to make a profit. If businesses do in fact need to be profitable, then is there an ethical or moral level of what profit should be? Additional topics include assessing the impact of the top management salaries, stockholder's expectations and how profitable companies help and/or harm the economy and the environment and the ethical implications of these impacts.

### What is a Relationship?

Humans are social creatures. We have an innate need to connect with others, and we do so through by exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages. Relationships – whether familial, romantic, platonic, or professional – are a fundamental part of the human experience, and communication is the collaborative and relational force we use to construct our social realities. These ties often have a profound and lasting impact on how we see ourselves, others, and the world around us. Accordingly, the purpose of this course is to explore the meanings of different types of relationships by drawing on relevant communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts and related research in sociology and psychology. Examples of topics that will be examined include: the processes and effects surrounding relationship development, maintenance, and dissolution; how culture and other group identity characteristics can influence relationships; and how new communication technologies affect the way relationships are defined and carried out.

## B. Addressing Urgent Questions\* (4 credits)

Because the course is a key part of the Urgent Challenges Curriculum, all students complete the Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar (UCS 20201 ADDRESSING URGENT QUESTIONS). Most students will enroll in the Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar in the spring 12-week term, following their Enduring Questions Seminar (UCS 10101) in the fall. Students with appropriate composition transfer credit will generally enroll in Addressing Urgent Questions (UCS 20201) in their first semester at Hiram College.

### UCS 20201: ADDRESSING URGENT QUESTIONS: 4 Hour(s)

UCS 20201: ADDRESSING URGENT QUESTIONS ~ Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar: The Addressing Urgent Questions seminar prepares students for Hiram's curriculum and the team-taught Urgent Challenges Seminar by introducing them to collaborative problem-solving and project-based learning. Each course focuses on an Urgent Question such as "The Environment: How do we address climate change?" or "Inequality: How do we address the effects of economic inequality in Ohio?" Students will be asked to consider relevant literature on a topic, to analyze and propose solutions in written and oral discourse—both individually and collaboratively—and to develop research skills that permit them to investigate important questions and hypotheses. Reflective learning integrates these ideas into various spheres of students' own lives—coursework, career, calling, character, and community. Students in all sections will be required to complete and be prepared to thoughtfully discuss all course readings, to responsibly engage with outside research, to give at least one oral presentation, to participate in a group presentation, to maintain and develop an ePortfolio, to reflect on their learning regularly, and to write at least two projects or essays—culminating in a multi-modal signature assignment. This course aligns with the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) requirements for English Composition: Second Writing Course (TME 002).

***\*Failure to complete an Enduring Questions Seminar (UCS 10101) or Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar (UCS 20201) with a passing grade will result in an incomplete graduation status and will require the successful completion of another Addressing Urgent Questions Seminar (UCS 20201 ADDRESSING URGENT QUESTIONS) or some other appropriate writing, speaking, and project-based learning course equivalency approved by the associate dean of the college.***

## SELECT EXAMPLES OF URGENT QUESTIONS SEMINARS (UCS 20201):

### Apocalypse How?

"Some say the world will end in fire / some say in ice," wrote Robert Frost. From poets and prophets to climatologists and cosmologists, human beings have long speculated, agonized, and even rejoiced about the end of the world. In a time of pandemic disease, climate crisis, and political hostilities, our world seems especially rife with apocalyptic anxieties, pervading everything from our politics to our entertainment. In this course, we will explore how ideas about the apocalypse—from scientific theories to speculative fantasies—circulate, persuade, and take hold. Focusing in particular on manifestations of the apocalyptic imagination in political rhetoric and popular culture, we will juxtapose historical examples of apocalyptic apprehensions with our contemporary preoccupations to investigate the various purposes that the apocalypse serves.

### Are Sports Political or Personal?

Through the study of non-fiction and autobiography, this course seeks to expand our cultural understanding of the importance of Sports. We will explore the tension between sports as personal entertainment and cultural change. Primary sources of sports information minimize the complex social dynamics between different sports, athletes, and fans. At an immediate level we see sport as entertainment or an actual pastime that is a pleasant diversion from our regular routines. However, we will also use ethics to look at the political side of Sports as well. As for politics, we will consider how sport has often been the agent of social change regarding economics, race, class and gender just to name a few things. The violent nature of some physical sport has been an important element of what sports that we consider as 'mere'

entertainment. We will discuss biography, race, class, and gender in relation to our fondness for violent and non-violent entertainment. I have chosen works that emphasize the traditional aspects inherent in Sport such as determination, toughness, and winning and losing. We will also look at the way that the media portrays its human contestants off the field. Sport reaffirms our status as humans that are part of a social group, but sport also is a means of achieving a kind of immortality. Thus, what is the connection between sport and the fact that the Greek Gods and Goddesses lived on Mount Olympus?

### **Who Can Live the American Dream?**

From the early days of the republic, Americans have been told to lift themselves up by their bootstraps, climb the social ladder, and to live the American Dream. While this rhetoric of self-making has been an American mantra, particularly in popular culture, how achievable is this dream? This course will scour American literature and popular culture to determine who gets to live the dream, considering the self-making journeys of women, men, immigrants, Native peoples, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and disabled people. In the end, we'll ask if the self-made American is a myth or a reality.

### **How Do We Feed Nine Billion?**

There are currently 7.7 billion human beings on Earth and at our current growth rate, we will reach 9 billion around the year 2050. Feeding that many people is a daunting task, but it is much harder than we can imagine. Given climate change, we need to feed 9 billion using less energy, less fertilizer and less water than we currently do. It is possible, but we will need to make some creative changes in how and where we grow food and in what we eat as food.

### **Who and What is an American?**

The question who and what is an "American" has been central to the political, sociocultural, and economic history of this country. It has become particularly important in recent times and politics—hence, the urgency in answering it in a rigorous and informed academic fashion. This course looks at the theoretical/conceptual issues of historiography, identity, dominance, politics, and multiculturalism. In addition to numerous conceptual debates, this course also examines the history and experience of African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and European Americans in the evolving United States. The answer to the question who and what is an "American" is important and will play a defining role in this country's future including the nature of its democracy, evolving society, and status in the world community.