

AMERICAN CARNIVAL

Honors First Year Seminar

What can we learn from Americans at play?



Step right up to your first semester at Worcester State! In this seminar, we will explore American culture and history through the lens of amusements: fairs, amusement parks, carnivals, circuses, freak shows, dime museums, and resort towns. While these topics do exemplify “fun” and “frivolous” aspects of the past, they are worth careful scholarly attention and can be unpacked in numerous ways. Our exploration will take us on a rich, whirlwind tour through history, images, advertisements, biography,

film, fiction, and place; along the way you’ll strengthen your abilities to analyze, communicate, and create new knowledge. You will also be introduced to the rigors, challenges, and joys of college learning and the honors program in a focused seminar linked to your honors English class in a learning community of fellow honors students. Your first year seminar will be an anchor of your college experience; I encourage you to make the most of it. ♡

A WORD ABOUT THE HONORS PROGRAM

This course, along with the other honors first-year learning communities, is a key component of the Commonwealth Honors Program at Worcester State University. You have been invited to be part of one of the state’s premier programs for high-achieving students who show great academic promise. The Honors Center is located in LRC 218 on the main floor of the library; phone x8467. Stay up to date with



honors news and events by subscribing to the Google calendar (see worcester.edu/honors), liking the Honors Facebook page, subscribing to the blog (wsuhonors.wordpress.com) or following its Twitter feed, @HonorsWSU. The Director is Dr. Karen Woods Weierman (English) kweierman@worcester.edu and the Assistant Director is Dr. Jennifer Hood-DeGrenier (Biology) jhooddegrenier@worcester.edu.

YOUR COURSE TICKET

WHERE & WHEN

T/Th 1 - 2:15 pm Sullivan 222

COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Dr. Tona Hangen
(History Department)

Office: Sullivan 327D

Phone: x8688

Email:
thangen@worcester.edu

Office hours: W & F
9 - 10:30 am and by
appt; hours are posted
on my door & on the
course website under
“Prof Info”

Paired with: EN 250 “Creative
Thinking and Critical Writing”
with Dr. Mary Lynn Saul

CREDITS (3*) - Meets your
FYS requirement in LASC; also
counts as one of your 7 Honors
courses. *See course website for
the official University definition
of a credit hour.



COURSE OVERVIEW

The course involves reading, writing, research and group discussion. It is set up as a seminar, not a lecture course. It is intended to be a challenging course for Honors students. You will be expected to read 50-100 pages a week (sometimes more), and to write approximately 30 pages over the course of the semester. You will need to put in consistent effort during the whole term, including with your attendance. You'll enhance your research and writing skills through targeted history labs. You'll need to speak up in class and demonstrate active learning, not passive absorption. **Learning is not a spectator sport;** seminar-style learning is successful when discussion involves everyone in passionate, informed conversation. To take advantage of multiple learning styles and to help create a community of learning in this classroom, this course will assess your progress in several different ways. See page 3 for the specifics on how your grade is calculated.

READING LIST

Janet Davis, *Circus Age: Culture and Society under the American Big Top* (UNC Press, 1992) ISBN 0807853992

Erik Larson, *Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (Vintage, 2004) ISBN 0375725601

Sara Gruen, *Water for Elephants, A Novel* (Algonquin, 2007) ISBN 1565125606

Recommended: Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 7e (Bedford/St Martins 2010) ISBN 0312601433



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES



All first year seminars must fulfill these three student learning outcomes for the LASC program; under each one is how I've "translated" it into terms meaningful for this course.

1) Students will demonstrate effective oral and written communication

For us that means... through consistent and substantive contribution to class discussion over the semester, students will construct a group framework for understanding the history of

leisure, amusements, circuses and carnivals in American culture. Students demonstrate effective written communication in labs and papers, and effective oral communication on the radio project and at the FYE Poster Event.

Students will demonstrate active engagement in seminar-style learning, which includes: creating an inclusive environment for all students, taking intellectual risks without fear of failing or ridicule, cooperating with others in groups and discussions and being part of a learning community.

2) Students will apply skills in critical thinking

For us that means... students will analyze course texts along multiple dimensions of culture and

meaning (i.e. on a deeper level than just their content), forming and synthesizing their own original evidence-based interpretations.

3) Students will apply skills in information literacy

For us that means... students will learn to navigate electronic databases, find references to books and articles on a topic, physically locate books and periodicals, evaluate resources for reliability, authority, accuracy and usability, and demonstrate use of standard methods of reference and citation.



GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation in class (25%)

I will take attendance each day. You should be on time and ready for lively, respectful and substantive discussion, having done the assigned reading. Bring the reading with you to class so you can refer to it during discussion. Participation also includes interactions or sessions with our peer tutor, Kayleigh Berger.



The Barnum Show (25%)

This group project involves research into the life of famous American huckster and showman PT Barnum, and then writing, producing and performing a radio podcast series based on his life.

Poster Presentation (5%)

As a class, we'll participate in the First Year Experience poster session on Dec 10th.

You'll adapt your episode of the radio show and present it at the event, as a culminating experience tying together your learning in the course.

History "Labs" (40%)

There will be 5 of these, each giving you experience analyzing a different kind of historical source: a Wikipedia article, a photograph, a scholarly article, a novel, and a film.

Course Reflection (5%) An end-of-term reflection counts for 5% of your course grade.

They are front-loaded towards the first half of the semester, and give you opportunities to demonstrate increasing complexity of thought and prose as the term progresses.

Extra Opportunities These are NOT required, but we will have a few of these, including a weekend field trip to the Big E Fair in late Sept, and an evening screening of *Water for Elephants* later in the semester.

BREAKDOWN OF COURSE GRADE		
Attendance/ Participation	25%	In class, silent attendance will not receive full credit; seminar-style discussion is a big part of your successful experience in this course. Includes peer tutor sessions, as needed.
History Labs 1 - 2 @ 5 each	10%	Due dates: 9/16 and 9/25
History Labs 3 - 5 @ 10 each	30%	Due dates: 10/9, 10/23, and 11/13
Podcast Project: "The Barnum Show"	25%	15% for script & reflection 10% for the actual podcast final product
Poster Presentation	5%	Due on Reading Day: Dec 10th. Student Center, time TBA
Course Reflection	5%	Due on 12/9
	100%	

CLASS COMMUNICATION AND COURSE POLICIES



Curiosities: P. T. Barnum's famous hoax "FeeJee Mermaid," exhibited in the 1840's, was actually a mummified Japanese religious object made from an ape body sewed to a fish tail. But it sold tickets!

Course Blackboard & Website

All of the course information and material is available online in TWO places: on Blackboard and on a (public) website/blog. That way, if Blackboard is down, our work goes on. Your class gradebook is only found on Blackboard, however. You should bookmark the course website: tonahangen.com/wsc/fysfair or subscribe to its RSS feed.

My Standard Fine Print

- In-class technology: we will be busy in every class session and we don't need technological distractions. Silence your cell phones in class & refrain from texting and social media use. If you use a laptop (some days they will be needed), do so only for taking notes or accessing course materials.
- I will review proper citation with you; we will use MLA (which is

thoroughly described in Hacker, *Writer's Reference*). Please demonstrate exemplary academic integrity in all your writing for this course; plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class.

- If you have a documented disability (learning or otherwise), consult with me immediately at the outset of the course so we can design a solution to help you be successful in this class.

Email: Your worcester.edu email account is your official university email for course and college-related correspondence; please use it rather than a private email address for any course-related communication.

Email is the best way to reach me; I check it several times a day, although I am more likely to answer it during business hours. thangen@worcester.edu

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Contact the **Honors Program** with questions about honors courses and events, and for academic advising related to honors. Library 218, x8467

Disability Services Office is located in Admin A131, x8733, or at worcester.edu/DSO

Counseling Services can provide confidential assistance in crisis or ongoing support for any student's emotional/mental health. Staff are also trained responders for sexual assault. Office: 3rd floor of Student Center, x8072

Career Services: yes, even first-year students should get to know this office for help with resume, career exploration, jobs, internships, and more. Office: 3rd floor of Student Ctr, x8072

Your Academic Advisor in your department is a very important resource! Meet with your advisor early and often!



The **Academic Success Center** is the go-to location for first-year and undeclared advising and for tutoring services (all free of charge). Location: Admin A130, x8139.

The **Writing Center** provides free assistance to all students in areas of research & writing. Location: Sullivan 306, x8112. Email: writingcenter@worcester.edu. For hours, info, and online writing lab, visit the website: worcester.edu/writing, or like its Facebook page.

Worcester State Library: in addition to its book, journal and reference collection, the library has access to many articles through online databases, and to nearly anything in print through interlibrary loan (ILL). If you hit a paywall in your research, do not pay: work with the reference staff to find the appropriate way to access materials you need; in all likelihood you can get them either online or via ILL without additional cost.

#	Date	Topic	Preparation in Advance	What's Due
1	Thurs 9/4	Course Intro		
Unit I: A Trip Back to the White City (Columbian Exposition, 1893)				
2	Tues 9/9	Columbian Expo 1893	Larson, DWC Part I	
3	Thurs 9/11	Building White City: Wiki workshop	Larson, DWC Part II	
4	Tues 9/16	The Fair	Larson, DWC Part III	H-Lab #1 Wikipedia
5	Thurs 9/18	Photo Day 1: Chicago 1893	Larson, DWC Part IV + Epilogue	
6	Tues 9/23	Photo Day 2: The Freak Show	FS reading #1, circus image links online	
7	Thurs 9/25	Freak Show	FS reading #2	H-Lab #2 Photograph
Unit II: Running Away to the Circus				
8	Tues 9/30	Big Top I, Academic Circus	Davis, <i>Circus Age</i> , Ch 1-2	
9	Thurs 10/2	Library Day	none, bring laptops - Location TBA	
10	Tues 10/7	Big Top II	Davis, <i>Circus Age</i> , 3-5	
11	Thurs 10/9	Sin City: Vegas	none, film day	H-Lab #3 Article
12	Tues 10/14	Big Top III	Davis, <i>Circus Age</i> , 6-7	
13	Thurs 10/16	Discussion WFE #1	WFE, Part I	
14	Tues 10/21	Discussion WFE #2	WFE, Rest of the novel	
15	Thurs 10/23	The Big Easy: New Orleans	none, film day	H-Lab #4 Novel
Unit III: Carnies and the Freak Show: "Hey Rube!" - What We Can Learn from/about PT Barnum				
16	Tues 10/28	Carnival on Film	Film studies reading	
17	Thurs 10/30	"Freaks" in-class screening	"Freaks" readings	
18	Tues 11/4	Barnum and the Freakshow	PTB Reading 1	
19	Thurs 11/6	Sucker Born Every Minute	PTB Reading 2	No Class Tues 11/11
20	Thurs 11/13	Making a Podcast	Bring a laptop to class	H-Lab #5 Film
21	Tues 11/18	Barnum Research Day	Know how to use Audacity or Garage Band	
22	Thurs 11/20	Barnum Research Day	none, bring laptops	No Class Thurs 11/27
23	Tues 11/25	Project Workday	none, bring laptops	
24	Tues 12/2	Barnum Showcase		Barnum Show Podcast
25	Thurs 12/4	Poster Day	Prep for the Poster Session on Wed Dec 10th	
26	Tues 12/9	Course Wrap-Up		Reflection / Evaluation