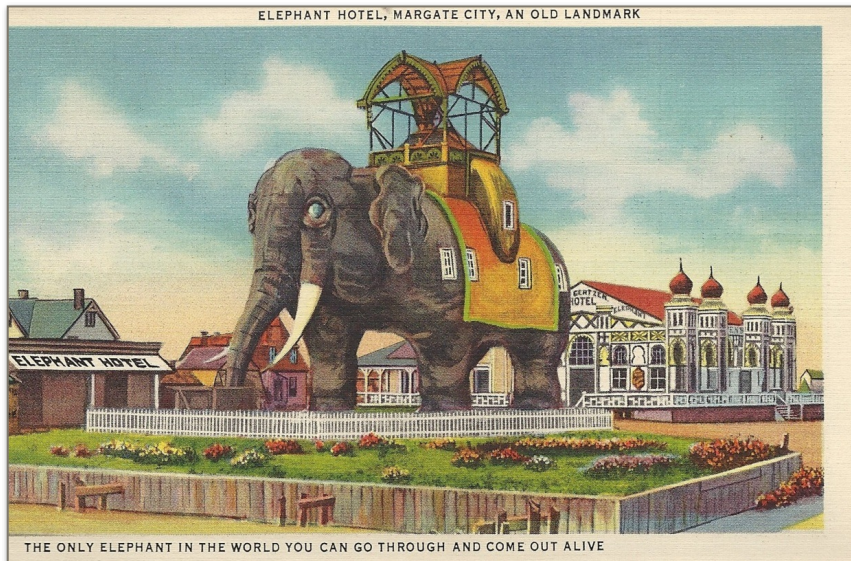


# AMERICAN CARNIVAL

## 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 setting. 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. The Director is Dr. Meghna Dilip (Chemistry) [mdilip@worcester.edu](mailto:mdilip@worcester.edu) and the Assistant Director is Dr. Cleve Wiese (English) [hwiese@worcester.edu](mailto:hwiese@worcester.edu).

### YOUR COURSE TICKET

#### WHERE & WHEN

T/Th 1 - 2:15 pm Sullivan 105

#### COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Dr. Tona Hangen  
(History Department)

Office: Sullivan 327D

Phone: x8688

Email:  
[thangen@worcester.edu](mailto:thangen@worcester.edu)

Office hours: MW  
12:30 - 2 pm and Tues  
9-10 am and by appt;  
hours are posted on my  
door & on the course  
website under “Prof  
Info”

**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.** In particular, college-level 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.

## BOOK LIST

Stephen Mihm, ed. *The Life of P.T. Barnum, Written by Himself* (Bedford Series, 2017) ISBN 978-1457692062

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



## 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 in class discussions and on the podcast project.

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 (30%)**

I will take attendance each day. You should be on time and ready for lively, respectful and substantive discussion, having done the assigned reading and prepared discussion questions and comments in advance. Bring the reading with you to class on its assigned days so you can refer to it during discussion. Participation also includes any Blackboard discussion boards.



The History Labs 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. The later ones are worth more points than the earlier ones.

**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.

**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.

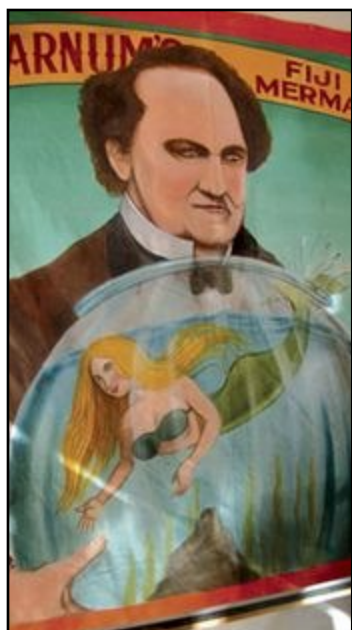
**Extra Opportunities** These are not required, but we will have a few of these, including a weekend field trip to the Big E Fair in late September, and an evening film screening later in the semester.

**BREAKDOWN OF COURSE GRADE**

Attendance/ Participation	30%	In class, silent attendance <b>will not</b> receive full credit; seminar-style discussion is a big part of your successful experience in this course. Includes Blackboard discussion board(s).
History Labs 1 - 2 @ 5 each	10%	Due dates: 9/17 and 9/26
History Labs 3 - 5 @ 10 each	30%	Due dates: 10/10, 10/24, and 11/14
Podcast Project: “The Barnum Show”	25%	Due date: 12/3 15% for script & reflection 10% for the actual podcast final product We will launch/share our podcast at the Honors Showcase 12/4
Course Reflection	5%	Due on 12/10
	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

All of the course information and material and the course grade book are available on Blackboard. Please get in the habit of checking it regularly for updates and course news.

### 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 (on some days they will be needed), do so only for taking notes or accessing course materials, not for social media or other extraneous use.
- 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, in accordance with the University's Academic Honesty policy; 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](mailto: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

**Student Accessibility Services** Office is located in Admin A131, x8733, or at [worcester.edu/SAS](http://worcester.edu/SAS)

**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](mailto:writingcenter@worcester.edu). For hours, info, and online writing lab, visit the website: [worcester.edu/FP-Writing-Center](http://worcester.edu/FP-Writing-Center).

**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 another appropriate way to access materials you need; in all likelihood you can get them either online or via ILL without additional cost. Get started at [worcester.edu/library](http://worcester.edu/library)

#	Date	Topic	Preparation in Advance (CR = Course Reader)	What's Due
1	Thurs 9/5	Course Intro		
<b>Unit I: A Trip Back to the White City (Columbian Exposition, 1893)</b>				
2	Tues 9/10	Columbian Expo 1893	Larson, DWC Part I	
3	Thurs 9/12	Building White City: Wiki workshop	Larson, DWC Part II	
4	Tues 9/17	The Fair	Larson, DWC Part III	H-Lab #1 Wikipedia
5	Thurs 9/19	Photo Day 1: Chicago 1893	Larson, DWC Part IV + Epilogue	
6	Tues 9/24	Photo Day 2: The Freak Show	Ostman "Photography and Persuasion" (CR) + Circus image links online	
<b>Unit II: Running Away to the Circus</b>				
7	Thurs 9/26	Freak Show	Bogdan, "In Search of Freaks" (CR)	H-Lab #2 Photograph
8	Tues 10/1	Big Top I, Academic Circus	Watch PBS American Experience <i>Circus</i> , Ch 1	
9	Thurs 10/3	Library Day	none, bring laptops - Location TBA	
10	Tues 10/8	Big Top II	Adams, "Circus Americanized" (CR)	
11	Thurs 10/10	Sin City: Vegas	none, film day	H-Lab #3 Article
12	Tues 10/15	Big Top III	Time, "The Last Act of the Greatest Show" (link)	
13	Thurs 10/17	Discussion WFE #1	WFE, Part I (Chapters 1-10)	
14	Tues 10/22	Discussion WFE #2	WFE, Part II (Chapters 11-25)	
15	Thurs 10/24	The Big Easy: New Orleans	none, film day	H-Lab #4 Novel
<b>Unit III: Carnies and the Freak Show: What We Can Learn from/about PT Barnum</b>				
16	Tues 10/29	Carnival on Film	Film Studies Module	
17	Thurs 10/31	"Freaks" in-class screening	Adams, "Sideshow Cinema" + Hawkins "One of Us" (CR)	
18	Tues 11/5	Barnum and the Freakshow	Fretz, "PT Barnum's Theatrical Selfhood" (CR) + Life of PT Barnum, Intro (pp. 1-25)	
19	Thurs 11/7	Sucker Born Every Minute	Life of PT Barnum, (pp. 26-145)	
20	Tues 11/12	Barnum: Myth and Reality	Bring Barnum book to class	
21	Thurs 11/14	Making a Podcast	Bring a laptop to class	H-Lab #5 Film
22	Tues 11/19	Barnum Research Day	Know how to use Audacity or Garage Band	
23	Thurs 11/21	Barnum Research Day	none, bring laptops	
24	Tues 11/26	Project Workday	none, bring laptops	<i>No Class Thurs 11/28</i>
25	Tues 12/3	Deconstructing Barnum	none, film day	Barnum Show Podcast
26	Thurs 12/5	Topic TBA	TBA, Check Blackboard	
27	Tues 12/10	Class Wrap-Up		Reflection / Evaluation