

Senior Colloquium

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Course Description

Senior Colloquium is a conversation-driven seminar designed to develop critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and respectful dialogue. Unlike most classes, this course is not built around lectures. Instead, students lead the majority of class discussions, and the instructor serves primarily as a facilitator rather than the central voice. The focus of the course is not on mastering a single body of content, but on learning how to engage seriously with ideas, test interpretations, listen carefully to others, and refine your thinking through discussion.

What We'll Study

The material for this course is largely chosen by you, the students, with instructor approval to ensure school appropriateness. Over the semester, we will work with a wide range of media and formats. These may include video clips, podcasts, art, music, scholarly articles, short stories, poetry, or book excerpts—among other possibilities. All assigned materials will be posted on Canvas at least one week before class, giving everyone sufficient time to prepare.

How the Class Works

Each week, you are expected to engage seriously with the assigned material before coming to class. Class time will be spent almost entirely in discussion—sometimes in small groups, sometimes as a full class—and these discussions will often be designed and led by your peers.

Because this is a student-powered course, passive attendance is not enough. Success depends on your willingness to contribute ideas, respond to others, and participate actively in both discussion and activities. Your thinking should be visible through what you say, ask, and build upon during class.

In addition, most weeks include a short, handwritten, in-class reflection designed to check comprehension and encourage independent thought.

How You'll Be Graded

Presence, Preparation, and Participation – 50%

This portion of your grade reflects how consistently you show up ready to engage. You are expected to arrive on time, complete the assigned material, and participate meaningfully in discussions and activities. Participation includes small-group work, full-class discussion, and engagement with activities led by classmates.

Leading Discussion – 25%

At least twice during the semester, your group will be responsible for leading class discussion. When your group presents, you are effectively teaching the class for the day.

This involves selecting a topic, assigning materials ahead of time, and designing discussion prompts or activities that encourage broad participation. You are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in how you structure the class session.

Your group will be evaluated on three main areas. First, comprehension: you should demonstrate a deep and accurate understanding of the topic. Second, use of materials: the assigned texts or media should meaningfully shape the discussion and activities. Third, engagement: your presentation should bring enough energy, structure, and clarity to motivate classmates to participate.

Because this is a discussion-based course, part of your evaluation depends on how effectively you engage others. Sessions that feel disengaged, unfocused, or low-energy may result in a lower score.

Weekly Written Reflection – 25%

On weeks when you are not leading discussion, you will complete a short-handwritten reflection during class, without the use of technology. These reflections confirm that you completed the assigned material and give you space to develop your own ideas before discussion begins.

Each reflection has two components. First, you will briefly summarize the main ideas of the material and identify aspects you believe deserve further discussion. Second, you will respond to a specific question provided by the instructor that day. This question functions like a short “pop quiz” and focuses on comprehension and engagement.

You are exempt from this reflection on days when your group leads discussion.

What Meaningful Participation Looks Like

- Participation in this course is not about speaking as much as possible. It is about speaking with purpose.
- Strong contributions might introduce a new idea that moves the discussion forward, build thoughtfully on a classmate’s comment, or respectfully challenge an interpretation while explaining why.
- Participation can also take the form of close analysis, evidence-based opinions, cultural or historical connections, or questions that open up new lines of inquiry.
- Listening is as important as speaking. Clarifying another student’s idea, synthesizing what has already been said, or helping the group transition to a new topic are all valuable forms of engagement.
- Intellectual risk-taking is encouraged, and perfection is not expected.

Ball State University Beneficence Pledge

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains outstanding faculty, staff, and students. Ball State is committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the varied experiences and worldviews of the people whom we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State's commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, inclusiveness at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive.

IA Wireless Device Policy

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being.

The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Students may receive excused absences at the professional discretion of the school nurse, the associate director of mental health services, the associate director of college counseling and student engagement, the director of academic affairs, and the executive director of the Indiana Academy. Unexcused absences occur when students miss class without prior approval from the aforementioned designated school officials. Continued absences (both excused and unexcused) from Academy classes increase the likelihood of unsuccessful completion.

Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, it is the expectation faculty engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.