

# 2016-2017 First Year Preceptorial Courses

## FALL 2016 FYP COURSES

### 1. Revolution, Democracy and The Game of Politics (Prof. Cigdem Cidam)

After the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, which put an end to the bi-polar world, many scholars began to talk about the “end of history.” Capitalism, and democracy, they argued, won over the only other alternative, Socialism. They claimed that from now on, we will not see any major radical upheavals; revolutions have become a thing of the past. That claim has lost its appeal after Arab Spring in 2011/2, major anti-government protests in Turkey in 2013, and the uprising in Ukraine, which brought thousands of people to Kiev’s Maidan, where they remained, risking their lives, till the government was toppled down. And yet, questions remain: Can we really call these events revolutions? What makes a revolution a successful one? Do revolutions come to an end when masses leave the streets and go back to their everyday lives? How long does a revolutions take? This course aims to address these questions with the help of a role-playing game. The game we will be playing this quarter is Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791. It will offer the opportunity to learn about the French Revolution, what the revolution was “about,” the ideas that inspired the revolution, and the conflicts that arose as participants tried to implement those ideas.

### 2. Cultures in Collapse: Lessons from the Past (Prof. Angela Commito)

Part of the allure of studying the past is the spine-tingling realization that even the most advanced societies can fall apart – sometimes with breathtaking rapidity. What does social collapse look like in the archaeological and written record, and why does it happen? Do societies really collapse, or simply change form? What value judgments do we make when we decide a society has “failed” or “succeeded”? We address these questions by examining a series of case studies of collapse from time periods and places around the world, such as the Late Bronze Age Aegean, the Assyrian Empire, the Roman Empire, Norse Greenland, the Maya, the Pueblo peoples of Chaco Canyon, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). We also use these case studies to try to understand collapse in the world today – from the decline of American cities, such as Detroit, to mass migrations stemming from violent conflict, as in the case of Syria. Throughout the course, we discuss how our understanding of social collapse in the past shapes the way we think about the strengths and vulnerabilities of our own society and the modern institutions we take for granted.

### 3. Whose Right? Exploration of Some Moral Problems with Rights (Prof. Felmon Davis)

We are going to explore some questions about rights and justice, for instance:

- whether reparations are owed to descendents of slaves in the US;
- whether religion justifies exemption laws forbidding discrimination;
- whether reparations are due for the history of slavery;
- whether animals have moral standing comparable to human beings.

The goal is to examine some controversial questions analytically and to consider reasonable grounds of agreement and how to reason responsibly and intelligently where agreement cannot be reached.

### 4. Crossing Boundaries (Prof. Louisa Matthew)

The theme of the chosen readings, and our approach to them, will be intersections between the humanities, especially literature, and science. “Chemistry”, “Biology”, “English”, “History” ...these are some of the categories into which our education is divided for us, and we tend to separate our learning, knowledge, and interests into these distinct categories. This course will examine how writers and thinkers have crossed the boundaries between science on the one hand and the humanities on the other hand. Whether a novelist takes on a scientific subject or a scientist turns to writing a novel; whether a feminist historian reinterprets the history of science, a chemist writes his autobiography, or

a journalist examines the geology of Iceland and California, they are all reinventing how we understand the world and the human experience by crossing traditional boundaries. We will also ask how scientific subjects and methods of inquiry have affected literature, and how non-scientists have shaped society's views and understanding of science.

### **5. Emerson's Circles (Joseph Johnson)**

What makes a human self? What is the obligation of individuals to other people, to the community and the natural environment? What does it mean to be educated—and what is the role of reading, writing, and thinking in the life of a student and citizen of the world? These are questions that the nineteenth-century thinker and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) asked and tried to answer throughout his lifetime. In this seminar, we will study some of Emerson's seminal essays and lectures alongside a range of historical response to his ideas. Our primary goal will be to sharpen our own academic reading, writing, and thinking skills. We will do so by listening closely to Emerson and those who have responded to him, both past and present, as a way to shape our own views. Readings will include Emerson, Thoreau, Kerouac, and the twenty-first century non-fiction writer Jon Krakauer, alongside a range of shorter works by social, political, and cultural theorists.

### **6. Radical Thinkers (Prof. Bernhard Kuhn)**

This course will consider the works of some eloquent advocates of ideas that in one way or another challenge the foundations of traditional Western culture. We will begin with Machiavelli, who argues that the ethical principles of Christianity and Humanism are incompatible with effective political governance. We will read Rousseau, who argues that civilization has led not to progress but to the moral debasement of the human species; Karl Marx, who attacks capitalism and calls upon the poor to revolt and establish a communist society; Friedrich Nietzsche, who assaults (among other things) Judeo-Christian theology and ethics, rejects every form of metaphysics, and substitutes "perspectivism" for eternal truth; and Sigmund Freud, who argues that the price of order and civilization is the purposeful mutilation of our instinctual desire. We will also read the Marquis de Sade who challenged fundamental social mores in his philosophically grounded pornographic writings. We will then look at Edward Abbey, "the desert anarchist," who mounts a ferocious assault on "industrial tourism" and the development of the national park system, and is accused by some as advocating "eco-terrorism." We will conclude with Peter Singer, who champions animal liberation, vegetarianism, and voluntary euthanasia, while charging that all excess wealth is criminal.

### **7. Food in Flux: A Historical Perspective on How Humans Relate to What We Eat (Prof. Brittney Belz)**

This class examines the historic relationship between food and humanity. We will focus on several major eras throughout history by observing how culture, religion, gender, economy, technology, morality, and historical events influenced and shaped the acquisition, preparation, and consumption of food. Both primary and secondary sources will be used to create context and allow us to investigate and sometimes re-create the diets of the past. Topics covered include: Feasting and Fasting: How religion, health, and wealth affected the Medieval Diet; Colonialism and The New World: Exotic foods and how those were acquired during the 16th-18th centuries; Victorian Revolution: Industry, technology, the ideal homemaker, and innovations in the 19th to early 20th centuries; Make Do or Do Without: Austerity, Rationing, Science and Nutrition during the Depression and World War II; Does anyone Really Like Turkish Delight?: Fictional food in classic literature and fantasy stories; A Women's Place is in the Kitchen, or is it? Technological and Societal advances, the change in gendered domesticity after 1950; So where does that leave us now? What choices are we as individuals or society making about food in our daily lives and how does that compare to the challenges faced in the past?

### **8. Food, Culture, and Society (Prof. David Nowakowski)**

Many of us are fortunate enough to be able to choose, several times each day, when and what to eat. But how do our food choices, and our society's policies and practices around food, affect our community and the communities where our food is produced, whether close to home or around the world? Do our food choices help or harm indigenous communities, the poor, the disadvantaged? What about the effects on the animals, plants, and the natural world? And how can we balance these different concerns, when they come into conflict with each other? We will examine classic and contemporary works by Wendell Berry, Michael Pollan, Peter Singer, Vandana Shiva, and others, as we work out our own answers to these complex questions.

## **9. Constructing the Self (Prof. Anastasia Pease)**

The Ancient Greek oracle at Delphi commanded its visitors: “Know Thyself.” In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, old Polonius famously advises his son, “To thine own self be true.” In modern American culture, you are also often told to live as your true, authentic, self. But who *are* you? Where is that true self to be found? Is it in your genes, your environment, your habits? Can you (or others) find your true self on your FaceBook profile? In your Twitter feed? Or maybe you are what you eat or what you read and watch? Or maybe you think, therefore you are?

In this course we will discuss the concept of the “SELF” by examining texts, talks, and films centered upon the human search for identity. Besides literature and philosophy, the class will tap into the most recent findings in genetics and epigenetics, biology, anthropology, cognitive science, behavioral economics, psychology, and sociology.

## **10. On Travel (Prof. Stacie Raucci)**

This course will explore the concept of travel in literature, film, and culture. We will consider why people travel and the possible effects of encountering difference. We will also discuss what it means to be a reader/watcher of someone else’s travel narrative and what it is like to “travel” the world from the comfort of your sofa. The course will begin with an overview of the concept of travel before setting off on adventures with various people over a range of time periods and locations. We will start our wide-ranging journey with Homer’s *Odyssey*, find ourselves in the 1950s with Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and study abroad with the cast of *L’Auberge Espagnole* (2002), among others.

## **11. Living Through Troubling Times (Prof. Jeannette Sargent)**

We’ll take a close look at how people deal with the big and little disasters of life by examining works of literature from as far back as ancient China (Tao Te Ching) to the futuristic novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. Winnie the Pooh turns out to be a model Taoist who lets his life be guided by the Tao Te Ching, while Atwood gives us a glimpse of the future we may be creating for ourselves as we try to figure out how much we want technology and marketing to control our lives. Rabbi Kushner’s *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* asks us to consider why people believe in divine intervention in human affairs, and Boccaccio’s *Decameron* gives us entertaining insight into how people dealt with the Black Death in Florence in the fourteenth century. The short stories of Raymond Carver show how easy it is to be overwhelmed by in the modern world and the dangers of isolation, while the contemporary David Sedaris offers humorous takes on serious problems like death and political correctness.

## **12. Inequality: Causes and Consequences (Prof. Stephen Schmidt)**

There has never been a society that was free of inequality between its citizens - political, economic, or social. In this preceptorial we will look at the ways that different people, in different times and places, have understood the causes and consequences of this inequality. Why does it persist? Can it be eliminated, and if so, how? How do our religious or philosophical beliefs determine our attitudes about it? Is a society of true equals possible, or are we destined always to live in a society where some people are more equal than others? Many different answers are possible; the Bible and the Baghavad Gita answer the question in religious terms, Plato and Freidrich Nietzsche answer it in philosophical terms, and Karl Marx and Fredrick Douglass answer it in social/historical terms. We will look at the perspectives of those who have found themselves at the top of the structure and those who have found themselves at the bottom, those who have sought to justify it, those who have sought to overthrow it, and those who have sought simply to reconcile themselves to it.

## **13. The Rules of Madness (Prof. Patrick Singy)**

You often feel sad – do you suffer from depression? You are obsessed with not eating too much – are you anorexic? You cannot concentrate – do you suffer from ADHD? In the last two centuries, moral flaws, existential difficulties, and idiosyncratic traits have regularly been reinterpreted as psychiatric diseases. But are these diseases real, and in what sense of “real”? Have they been discovered or invented? And how do we draw the line between the normal and the pathological? History shows that this line has been constantly redrawn under the influence of broad cultural changes, business decisions, or personal interests. After a brief general introduction on the history of psychiatry, from Philippe Pinel in the early nineteenth century to the recent DSM-5, this course will focus on a select number of psychiatric diseases and debate the proposition that they are historically constructed.

#### **14. This is No Place Like Home (Prof. Jordan Smith)**

This course is an investigation into the ways in which the familiar becomes strange. We'll be looking at work from a variety of genres (essays, fiction, poetry) and authors (Marilyn Robinson, Colm Toibin, Mikhail Bulgakov, James Baldwin, Elizabeth Bishop) who take the idea of home as the starting point for discovering how the uncomfortable, uncanny, and uncertain informs our experience, even where we'd expect to be most at ease.

#### **15. Language and Identity in Japan (Prof. Junko Ueno)**

This course will focus on social, linguistic, and cultural issues related to one's identity in contemporary Japan, which is going through a transition from the era of internationalization to the era of globalization. The students will learn diverse aspects of Japanese culture and obtain new perspectives on the norms and values evident in the Japanese language use. The topics of the readings and discussions will include the role of technology in the spread of Japanese language and culture, hybrid language use in an urban context, Japanese identity in multilingualism, and learning Japanese as a foreign language. Through these readings and discussions, we will also critically examine the role of language in one's identity formation.

#### **16. Arguing about God (Prof. Kirk Wegter-McNelly)**

People have been arguing for millenia about whether God exists. The contemporary science-vs-religion debates, pitting the New Atheists against advocates of Intelligent Design (ID), are just the latest iteration of this perennial controversy. In her 2010 genre-bending novel, *36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction*, philosopher and novelist Rebecca Goldstein explores these debates through her protagonist, Cass Seltzer, a psychologist of religion with his own theories about why belief in God persists despite the advances of science. Along the way Goldstein skewers New Atheism, ID, and traditional theism with equal verve. The course examines the various arguments and refutations put forward by Goldstein/Seltzer, as well as the alleged (ir)relevance of argumentation to people's belief in God. It also considers whether the book, albeit a clever vehicle for Goldstein's own views, succeeds as a piece of literary fiction.

#### **17. They Paved Paradise and Put up a Parking Lot (Prof. Gail Donaldson)**

This course investigates how culture shapes our vision of nature through an examination of literary, scientific and philosophical accounts of the natural world and the impact that humans have had upon it. We will consider human relationships with the land, with animals and with food, and focus on current concerns about sustainability in the tension between the needs of human populations and the need for conservation. Texts will include fiction, non-fiction and film, ranging from past visions of the natural world as an 'earthly paradise' to present accounts of 'The End of Nature.'

#### **18. Coming of Age in the Non-western World: Culture and Gender (Prof. Rajashree Mazumder)**

In this course, we will explore the coming of age experience in a non-western setting. We will consider different cultural meanings associated with the coming of age experience and how these experiences vary with respect to gender, race, class, religion, sexuality and geographic location. We will try to understand how and in what contexts are "coming of age" stories told and how does popular culture represent and shape coming-of-age experiences. We will explore these issues through articles, memoirs, works of fiction, websites, films, television shows, and our own personal narratives.

# WINTER 2017 FYP COURSES

## 1. Dreaming (Prof. Peter Bedford)

Many cultures, including our own, have wondered about the significance of dreams. Do dreams have meaning? Are dreams telling us something? Cognitive Science has emphasized the importance of dreaming, and of sleep more generally, for mental health and wellbeing. But do dreams have a function beyond that? This class examines a variety of classic views on ‘dreams’, considers dreams in historical and cross-cultural perspectives, and reflects on how the modern scientific study of dreaming relates to the study of dreams from historical, psychological, anthropological, and religious perspectives.

## 2. Goodness, Happiness, and Truthi-ness (Prof. Suzanne Benack)

In this course, we are going to look at the relation of goodness and happiness – does being morally good make a person happy? Or could we be happier if we threw off the chains of moral constraints? We will examine how some philosophers, fiction writers, political theorists, religious traditions, and psychologists have seen the relation of goodness and happiness. At the end of the course, we’ll also turn to truth(-i-ness). Is there “real” “objective” truth? Or is everything a matter of social convention or personal choice?

## 3. Cultures in Collapse: Lessons from the Past (Prof. Angela Commito)

Part of the allure of studying the past is the spine-tingling realization that even the most advanced societies can fall apart – sometimes with breathtaking rapidity. What does social collapse look like in the archaeological and written record, and why does it happen? Do societies really collapse, or simply change form? What value judgments do we make when we decide a society has “failed” or “succeeded”? We address these questions by examining a series of case studies of collapse from time periods and places around the world, such as the Late Bronze Age Aegean, the Assyrian Empire, the Roman Empire, Norse Greenland, the Maya, the Pueblo peoples of Chaco Canyon, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). We also use these case studies to try to understand collapse in the world today – from the decline of American cities, such as Detroit, to mass migrations stemming from violent conflict, as in the case of Syria. Throughout the course, we discuss how our understanding of social collapse in the past shapes the way we think about the strengths and vulnerabilities of our own society and the modern institutions we take for granted.

## 4. What’s College For? (Prof. John Cramsie)

Why do colleges and universities exist and why do women and men seek them out? Do they exist to nurture our humanity, moral imagination, and ethical sensibilities? Are they businesses that sell student-customers the essential credentials for lucrative employment in an entrepreneurial economy? Are they institutions that protect and renew essential human qualities against the fads, fashions, and fanaticisms of any particular moment in time? Do they exist to provide a ‘college experience’ in which socializing, career networking, and extracurricular activities are really more important than education? Are they the crucial rung on the ladder of social mobility? Do they exist to serve the public good or simply private, personal gain? Why are you here? We think this is a modern debate, but teachers, students, and citizens have wrestled with similar questions for centuries and they continue to decisively affect colleges and universities around the globe. We can say for certain that the founding principle of colleges and universities concerns education, to teach and learn certain ‘ways of knowing’. So, they exist to educate, but precisely what kind of education, for what purpose, for whose benefit, and paid for by whom? This Preceptorial will debate questions like these. In doing so we will examine how individuals inside and outside colleges and universities have grappled with such questions, from historians and teachers to novelists, playwrights, and filmmakers. We will critically read ‘texts’ (broadly defined), discuss with each other the insights to be found in them, and develop sound evidence-based and aesthetically pleasing written arguments about their meaning and value. Why are you here?

## 5. DREAM CAFÉ: Viewing Culture through Dreams (Prof. Patricia Culbert)

What is dreaming? How do scientists study & define dreams? How do we define ourselves through dreams? How do artistic and literary representations of dreams speak to our communal understanding? Are the archetypes of our dreams universal? How do artists shape dreams to reflect culture? Course readings and writings will encourage critical evaluation of these questions on a personal, individual basis and on a communal, reflective level. We’ll look at dreams through the eyes of writers, artists, playwrights, film makers. We’ll view different cultures through the medium of dreams. We’ll research the science of dream theory and look at how the psychology of dreams

has shaped how we view dreams. We'll "create" dreamscapes in creative writing exercises & in guided "meditations." We'll keep dream journals and "stage" a fragment of our dreams. We'll view dream films & read novels based on dreams.

## **6. Blow Up Your iPhone? A Rational Luddite's Guide to Technology (Prof. Hugh Jenkins)**

Thoreau famously said that men have become the tools of their tools. And that was almost 200 years ago. Are we now devices of our devices, apps of our apps? Do we really want self-driving cars and artificial intelligence? Probably not. But maybe so. Let's consider how some of the greatest (or at least most interesting) minds have approached such questions in works from Frankenstein to Terminator II, Walden to The Walking Dead. Luddites and future engineers are both welcome to this course: the idea is that we can all learn from each other, and maybe even take control of our own destiny.

## **7. Literature, Ethics, and Environment (Prof. Katherine Lynes)**

In this course we will consider and explore the intersections of human cultures and the environment, with an emphasis on the social and cultural dynamics of the environment and environmental action. Some questions we will consider: What are the ethical questions that we pose and wrestle with as we interact with and within our environment? What is the place of literature in community, literacy, and environmental activism? To what extent does place matter in our conceptions of what nature is? What are the connections between race, class, and environmental degradation and environmental activism? How do class and gender enter into the nexus of ethical considerations that shape our environment? What global perspectives might we consider when we make decisions about our local spaces? We will consider both the concept of "nature" as we consider the concept of human culture. How does the language we use when writing about nature affect what we do in, for, and to nature?

We will consider both the concept of "nature" as we consider the concept of human culture. This course is collaborative in nature, and as such students should bring their interests, curiosities, and discoveries to add to the mix. A partial list of possible readings include those by Terry Tempest Williams, Barbara Kingsolver, Evelyn White, bell hooks, M. Jimmie Killingsworth, Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Luther Standing Bear, Running-Grass, Simon Ortiz, Ana Castillo, Wangari Maathai, possibly readings from Orion magazine.

## **8. WAR, What is it Good For? Antiwar Dissent from Ethics to Politics (Prof. Lori Marso)**

This course examines anti-war dissent and organizing from antiquity to today. We will look at several kinds/ways/sources of dissent, from ancient literature to contemporary theory and film. A central question of the course will be to discern the different strategies of antiwar discourse that follow from the focus on suffering bodies in pain versus political movements that challenge the sources and deployment of sovereignty.

## **9. Culture, Gender, and Performance: Professional Wrestling (Prof. Jen Mitchell)**

Through theoretical, historical, and cultural readings, as well as the viewing of representative performances, this course will examine how wrestling reflects and responds to cultural politics. Transdisciplinary course materials, including wrestling performances and documentaries, will enable us to explore issues including gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, violence, national identity and the construction of popular culture.

## **10. Living (Critical) Theory (Prof. Daniel Mosquera)**

This is an intensive "species" of Honors Preceptorial designed to promote critical literacy—critical reading and analysis of a selective variety of visual and written expressions—through the use and engagement of what we have come to know (misunderstand, malign, fear, and also mistrust!) as "**theory**." The course is intended to improve cultural, political, and historical literacy and argumentative and writing skills. By helping students to discern, shape, and learn to control a writing voice, the course will develop and hone skills in close reading and analysis of cultural expressions ranging from, among others, popular culture, philosophy, media studies, cinema, mass culture, literature, natural sciences, etc. We will explore some key theories and concepts deriving from philosophical, political, literary, and cultural interpretations in very concrete contexts with the intent of making this complex world a little more translucent and our engagement of it more full of agency and therefore—and hopefully—more significant in our lives.

## **11. Is Extinct Forever? (Prof. Stephanie Peek-Dosiek)**

Extinction is inevitable, but recent scientific advancements suggest that it might not be forever. We might be able to bring these lost species back to life. But should we?

Every species that has lived, or will ever live, will go extinct. Extinction occurs at gradual rates throughout Earth history, but every once and a while there is an extreme event that causes a spike in the extinction rate. We call these events “mass extinctions” – when 75% of all life goes extinct in a geological instant. Historically they are caused by natural disasters like glaciers, massive volcanic eruptions, or meteor impacts. But our current extinctions have a more un-natural cause: humans. Whether we call this a biodiversity crisis or a mass extinction does not matter, but we are causing extinction at rates far above what we have evidence for in the fossil record.

This class will look at writings from scientists, journalists, and ethicists to investigate this topic. What is the evidence for these extinctions and how does it compare to the fossil record of past extinctions? How do we go about bringing a species back from extinction? Can it actually be done? Should it be done? Or should we focus our efforts on preventing extinction in the first place? We will tie in scientific concepts with the underlying philosophical and ethical questions.

## **12. Living Through Troubling Times (Prof. Jeannette Sargent)**

We'll take a close look at how people deal with the big and little disasters of life by examining works of literature from as far back as ancient China (Tao Te Ching) to the futuristic novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. Winnie the Pooh turns out to be a model Taoist who lets his life be guided by the Tao Te Ching, while Atwood gives us a glimpse of the future we may be creating for ourselves as we try to figure out how much we want technology and marketing to control our lives. Rabbi Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* asks us to consider why people believe in divine intervention in human affairs, and Boccaccio's *Decameron* gives us entertaining insight into how people dealt with the Black Death in Florence in the fourteenth century. The short stories of Raymond Carver show how easy it is to be overwhelmed by in the modern world and the dangers of isolation, while the contemporary David Sedaris offers humorous takes on serious problems like death and political correctness.

## **13. Visions and Visionaries (Prof. Margaret Graham)**

Description: In this course, we will focus on vision as a fundamental technique that so-called “leaders” use to influence their constituents and achieve their goals for themselves or their communities. We will explore the cultural meaning and significance of vision, the role of the visionary and their community in creating and forwarding the vision, and factors that influence the vitality of the vision. We will analyze presentations of visions in many forms including novels, essays, biographies, and films, and discuss how the presentation of the vision affects our interpretations of leaders and communities. We will examine and debate concepts related to visionary leadership such as power, good, evil, and truth. Thus vision will be a vehicle in our endeavor to hone students’ critical reading, thinking, and communication skills.

## **14. Art and Ethics (Prof. Katherine Tullmann)**

Every art form, from film to photography, has the power to move us. Because of this, art is the perfect medium for promoting moral values and raising awareness about immoral issues. This course explores the relationship between art and ethics. We will consider such questions as: what is the relationship between the quality of art and its portrayal of morality? Can artworks teach us about how to be better people? Is it ok for us to feel sympathy for fictional “devils,” such as Walter White or Dexter Morgan? Students will be asked to explain their own examples of artworks that raise ethical issues and watch morally significant films and TV shows. We will read both historical and contemporary work by artists, art theorists, and philosophers of art on the topic of morality, and write about topics like the connection between art and religion, portrayals of race and violence in film, and the ethical implications of pornography.

## **15. Hope (Prof. Bunkong Tuon)**

In this Precept class, we will explore the topic of hope, its function and purpose in our lives. Reading texts written in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where we have witnessed war, genocide, and atrocities, we will ask the following questions: Where do we find hope? How do we maintain it in light of the injustice and brutality of the

world? How do art and literature play a role in finding it? What happens when we lose it? Possible reading list includes: Art Spiegelman's *Maus I and II*, Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Chanrithy Him's *When Broken Glass Floats*, Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*, and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*.

## **16. Growth and the Good Life (Prof. Ellen Foster)**

Does growth make us better off? Most economists (and many of us) would answer “yes—of course,” and could point to dramatic improvements in standard of living made possible by the expansion of markets and improvements in technology as evidence that growth does indeed make us better off. Others question whether improvements in material well being mean that we are moving closer to living “the good life.” Does having more “stuff” mean that we are happier? Isn't there more to life than working, shopping and consuming? Environmentalists argue that environmental degradation and natural resource depletion caused by rapid economic and population growth are moving us closer to disaster, not closer to the good life. Critics of the market system point to inequalities of income distribution and the plight of groups “left behind” or “left out” during periods of growth as evidence that growth doesn't result in a good life for many in our society.

We will take an in-depth look at issues related to growth and the good life in this precept section. This course is organized around the following questions:

- What is the good life?
- Can economic growth bring us closer to the good life?
- How can growth undermine the good life?
- What can we do to help ensure a bright future—a better life—for ourselves and our children?