FRESHMEN SEMINARS AVAILABLE FOR FALL 2013
These are available to students who are not already participating in other special UAlbany freshmen programs like the Honors College, EOP, and Living-Learning Communities.
We recommend all eligible students choose one.

Freshmen Year Experience 1-credit classes

American History Happens Here: how to find it and use it
Professor Lauren Kozakiewicz
Whether you love or hate history you are going to be in a history class at some point during your time at Albany. This course will give you the skills both to do well and enjoy the experience. There will be practical tips on reading, writing, and speaking on historical topics. And you will learn how to make the best use of University’s academic resources, something that will help every eager scholar, even those who don’t become history majors. This section will work with American history resources.

Global History Happens Here: how to find it and use it
Professor Jeannine Chandler
Whether you love or hate history you are going to be in a history class at some point during your time at Albany. This course will give you the skills both to do well and enjoy the experience. There will be practical tips on reading, writing, and speaking on historical topics. And you will learn how to make the best use of University’s academic resources, something that will help every eager scholar, even those who don’t become history majors. This section will work with global history resources.

An Introduction to Careers in Education
Professor Steven Doellefeld
Through your own experiences in education, you’ve developed a notion of what it means to be a teacher, but have you ever considered teaching as a career? We will explore demography and employment trends for instructional staff at different levels of formal schooling, from Kindergarten through higher education. In addition to readings and class discussions, we will meet and talk with people employed in the field -- not only in careers in the classroom, but also in the myriad of careers in both management and support staff that facilitate and enable teachers to better perform in their roles. This exploration will include, but not be limited to, school counseling, curriculum development, guidance, and administration.

Choices for a Healthy Planet
Professor Mary Ellen Mallia
How do choices in everyday life affect the environment? Most people are disconnected from the process by which goods and services are produced and disposed of, making it easier to develop unhealthy habits for the environment. This course will explore the meaning of sustainability, consider the link between lifestyle choices and their impact on the Earth and learn about steps that can be taken to create a healthier planet. Students will engage in reflective discussions based on assigned readings and hands on activities designed to promote environmental sustainability at the university.

Controversial Career Topics in Business
Professor Janet Marler and Professor Cecilia Falbe
In this course we will read and discuss two controversial books about business careers and the implications for those interested in a business career. First, is it good to "blow the whistle" on your employer? The first book is written by a former investment banker that gained him and his employer, Goldman Sachs, national "negative" attention. Second, how can a woman become a business leader of a major corporation and have a successful family life? The second book is written by the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, who provides advice for future aspiring business leaders, particularly women, how about how to have a successful work and family career.
Critical Thinking and Skepticism  
Professor Sean Rafferty  
Do you believe everything you read? This class will present students with the basic principles behind thinking critically. Students will be presented with a range of real world examples to show the value of a scientifically literate and skeptical outlook. Throughout the course, we will read The Demon Haunted World which is described on Amazon.com as “Demons, UFO's, the Loch Ness Monster, Big Foot, fairies and the like are all investigated in this incredible non-fiction book by the late Carl Sagan.”

Current Constitutional Issues  
Professor Tim Taylor  
This course examines a wide range of current constitutional issues in the news from abortion rights to hate speech. Students will study, analyze and critique Supreme Court decisions. The course introduces the students to major constitutional themes. Primary attention will be given to decisions involving voting rights, housing, criminal procedure, education, privacy, health care, and national security. The students will research the 2011-2012, 2012-2013 Supreme Court terms using the Court’s website. This course will provide the students with an opportunity to develop oral advocacy and research skills.

Food and Our Future: Understanding Sustainability through Science Literacy  
Professor Irina Holden  
We often read and hear about scientific studies in popular media, but how do we understand and use them? In this class, students will study basic concepts of science literacy - civic, practical, and cultural - while learning about issues related to food sustainability, such as food supply, production, and consumption. Course activities will include examining case studies and learning basic principles of online research. On completing the course, students will have gained a better understanding of food sustainability, as well as of the importance of science literacy in their academic and personal pursuits.

Globalization and the Environment  
Professor Robert Keesee  
You’ve probably heard the phrase “The world is getting smaller”. Advances in technology, including communication and transportation, have made resources, goods, labor, and services more accessible from far ranging places across the globe. A challenge in a globalizing society is how do people respond to their local situation and at the same time maintain a global perspective. In other words, how do we “act locally, think globally”. What we will do in this seminar is explore how this process of globalization provides both problems and opportunities in dealing with the environment from the local to global scale. After a little groundwork is laid down, the specific topics will depend on the interests of the class. Students will be responsible for presentation and discussion of these topics.

God and New York  
Professor Nadieszda Kizenko  
When we think of New York City, we think of America at its most modern - and that it is. But New York City and all of New York State are also a rich landscape of religious practice, innovation, and conflict. New York has been the first introduction to the United States for many immigrant groups, and almost every religion is represented on its territory. New York has also been the birthplace of numerous indigenous religious movements. How have the divine and the local intersected in the streets and hills of New York State? This class looks at some examples and encourages you to consider exploring your own region.

Multiculturalism in Today's U.S. Society  
Professor Blanca Ramos  
How do your heritage, background, race and ethnicity influence your view of the world? Your day-to-day interactions? This course helps students expand their awareness and understanding of how culture shapes and influences daily life, enhance your appreciation of different cultural groups within and outside of the U.S., and prepare you to function successfully in cross-racial, cross-ethnic, and cross-cultural contexts. Topics covered include immigration and the immigrant’s experience, racial and ethnic identity, and western and non-western values. You will be encouraged to analyze concepts, issues, and themes from a social justice perspective. The course offers you an opportunity to heighten awareness of your own immigrant background, racial and ethnic heritage, and cultural values and beliefs, particularly as this will strengthen your ability to grapple effectively with issues of multiculturalism in today’s U.S. society.

Personal Financial Planning for Freshmen  
Professor Kevin Bronner  
This course will instruct students how to conduct financial planning related to events such as 1) student loan payments, 2) credit card debt, 3) housing costs, 4) automobile payments. Basic accounting principles will be reviewed in class to enable the students to understand personal finance issues. Students will be able to construct a real or hypothetical personal financial plan.
Public Health Ethics: What the Heck is Public Health, and Why Should I Care?  
Professor Susan Harris

Public Health issues, dilemmas, and ethics surround us. They affect us personally. Selected readings will introduce what public health is all about and will present public health controversies to spur discussion and debate. How should you weigh your rights against the interests of the community where you live? Is your community responsible for the care of individuals who know better, but persist in unhealthy behaviors? In a time of scarce resources, is universal health care cost effective and is it built on social justice? Why should you care about social justice? How much government regulation of food and drugs is good for public health and safety, and how much intrudes on one’s personal lifestyle? Where does personal privacy and choice end, and where does community health and safety begin when it comes to contagious diseases, seatbelts, or alcohol use? This is just a sample of the opportunities and challenges this seminar has to offer those who want to get to know each other by joining in a lively public health conversation that affects each and every one of us and the college community.

Sex and American Culture  
Professor Carol Stenger

Sex is ubiquitous in American culture. Whether in the selling of sexy images in ads, movies and television to the pornographic and adult entertainment industries that have boomed with the advent of the internet, the old adage holds true that “sex sells.” But what kind of impact has this had on American society? What positive benefits has it brought and what negative impacts has it incurred? With these questions in mind, this seminar will explore the rise of the sexualization of American culture in the 1970s, the decade that witnessed the maturing of the Sexual Revolution, the women’s liberation and the gay rights movements, the rise of the pornographic industry and sex districts in major urban centers.

Start Something that Matters  
Professor Linda Krzykowski

“Start Something that Matters” to YOU: Be a Social Entrepreneur! Can you make money and do something meaningful? Can you be passionate about your career or is making money separate from doing what makes you happy? Social entrepreneurs are doing both and we’ll explore how in this class. Using the story of TOMS shoes, we’ll explore our interests and discover our passion.

Studio Visit: Developing a Sustainable Artistic Practice  
Professor Daniel Goodwin

Myths and stereotypes about what it means to be a contemporary artist are pervasive in our culture. Discover what it really means to be a socially-engaged studio artist today by visiting the studios of artists at a wide range of points in their careers, from undergraduate students in classes to MFA students in seminars, to established artists preparing to install their work in a museum or gallery. Together we will discover the diverse range of influences and approaches that guide these artists. You will experiment with techniques and processes through hands-on workshops as you explore the work of some of these practitioners in depth through writing exercises.

The World Ain't Feelin' Too Good: Politics, Power and Heal  
Professor Bruce Coles

Everywhere you look—on TV, the internet, in newspapers—you see evidence that the world ain't feelin' too good. Even in a wealthy country such as the United States, a number of folks are not well. Now think about that for a minute or two, and then ask yourself the following questions: What do you do to keep yourself healthy? What do you think makes people healthy in the larger community? Does having access to good healthcare produce good health? Why does where you are born, who you are, and where you live affect your health? Do justice and fairness impact health and, if so, what can you do about it? Come explore these questions and more. Together, we will challenge our personal and society's ideas and beliefs about what makes us sick and what makes us healthy as a people. We’ll critically assess the evidence that tells a story about the world in which we live and the impact it has on our health. We’ll chip away fiction from fact, weed out the dogma, and make some inferences regarding the truth. And we'll apply what we learn and collectively create some practical solutions for the future.

World of East Asian Studies  
Professor Anthony DeBlasi

Specially designed for freshmen studying Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, this seminar will help you understand the culture and background for these East Asian languages. You will work closely with faculty teaching language classes, understand study abroad opportunities, and connect with other freshmen interested in East Asian studies. The class will also include co-curricular ways to practice your language skills and learn about these fascinating cultures outside the walls of the classroom.

World of Languages and Culture  
Professor Ilka Kressner

Specially designed for freshmen studying French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and German, this seminar will help you understand the culture and background for these languages. You will work closely with faculty teaching language classes, understand study abroad opportunities, and connect with other freshmen interested in language acquisition and cultural studies. The class will also include co-curricular ways to practice your language skills and learn about these fascinating cultures outside the walls of the classroom.
For many years, a sign on the door of the Yiddish Studies program at Columbia University said "Learn Yiddish So Your Parents Won't Understand!" At 1000 years old, the Yiddish language today is spoken around the globe and its perseverance continues to baffle many observers who anticipated its demise many decades ago. This semester, we'll explore the history of the language, its many functions and manifestations throughout the ages, how it became the basis for a reinvigorated—and contested—Jewish identity in the early twentieth century, its many modern cultural forms, and prospects for its future. No knowledge of Yiddish is required and the class discussions and readings will be in English.