

## ***What is Collegiate Seminar?***

Collegiate Seminar is a set of four required courses designed to transform students at Saint Mary’s: Collegiate Seminar is a sequence of four student-centered, discussion-based courses that are taken by all students and led by faculty from all departments. The courses are based around discussion of a shared reading list, and are designed to be taken in sequence.

The shared reading list is means by which the common ground of learning happens (we usually call this ground “the liberal arts”: the readings are discussed every day in class for most of the class period. Through the discussion of these texts:

1. Students learn to seek genuine understanding of texts in dialogue with each other through the western tradition.
2. Students learn to think actively about course material, and to work out their own thoughts about it.
3. Essential to these arts are a number of basic abilities: to read closely; to annotate texts thoughtfully; to listen carefully; to understand the standpoint of speakers and writers; to assess their authority; to find one’s own voice; to ask incisive questions; to disagree constructively; to collaborate with others in a focused and open discussion; and to recognize and work within different genres of discourse.
4. In order to develop the common ground, we choose texts that are primarily from the western tradition, and some world texts that are in conversation with texts from the west. We also introduce some texts that don’t connect directly, but which connect thematically.

Second Semester First Year Students	First Semester Sophomore Students	Junior year	Senior year	Optional Seminars
Seminar 1: Critical Strategies and Great Questions— reading texts from across the time line of written history	Seminar 2: <i>Western Tradition 1</i> (650 BCE to 1200 CE)	Seminar 103: <i>Western Tradition 2</i> : (1500 -1900 CE)	Seminar 104: <i>The Global Conversation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries</i>	Seminar 144— <i>Multicultural Thought</i> Seminar 145— <i>World Traditions</i> Seminar 146— <i>Seminar on Topics in The Common Good</i>

OR

All TRANSFERS STUDENTS	TRANSFERS With 16-26 Credits coming in also take:	TRANSFERS with less than 16 also take:
Seminar 102 (a combination of Seminar 1 and Seminar 2)	Seminar 103 with terminal reflection/capstone	Seminar 104 with Capstones

## Learning in Collegiate Seminar

Collegiate Seminar invites us to discover new perspectives in books, great and small, far and near. Virginia Woolf, in her essay “How to Read a Book,” argues that reading transports us... “It is not merely that we are in the presence of a different person—Defoe, Jane Austin, Thomas Hardy—but that we are in a different world.” Seminar Participants’ own perspectives meet in discussion of these texts through the process of shared inquiry. Inquiry is fully shared when it includes a rich variety of questioning voices—voices of authors, of students, of instructors.

Wilson Harris, in his novel *The Ghost of Memory*, praised cultural inclusiveness, and connects it to understanding new perspectives: “It means one faction of humanity discovers itself in another; not losing its culture, but deepening itself. One culture gains from another; both sides benefit from opening themselves to a new universe.” Harris’ and Woolf’s statements express the aims of Collegiate Seminar. One aspect of this aim is Seminar’s commitment to inclusiveness of all voices in the classroom. This includes demographic inclusiveness, such as race, religion, nationality, gender identity and sexual orientation, ability, age group, political tendency, etc., but also includes voices that tend to be quiet. Seminar seeks to bring voice to every individual or collective act in the classroom that perceives and recognizes another’s world, whether that other is another culture, another demographic, or another self, that is, a friend.

Collegiate Seminar has a unique vantage from which to achieve this kind of recognition. The practice of Seminar assumes the possibility of persons opening themselves to other persons. And Seminar assumes (in another sense of the verb) the responsibility for creating the space in which worlds *can* merge. At the center of the many personal worlds in each Seminar classroom is an empty space, a text, and within that text an author. As Plato had his Socrates say in *Gorgias*, the author, alone of all persons present, cannot speak. It is up to the living to give the author a voice. In Seminar, the instructor and students try to make the texts speak, to make their authors present. Each voice brings its own world to breathe life into the author’s absent world. From the meeting of many living worlds, a single universe of discourse emerges that allows the text to speak.

Along with inclusion and recognition, intellectual challenge forms the foundation of shared inquiry. Students are not sheltered from views with which they disagree. Within the context of respectful discourse students must also be willing to leave their comfort zone, to engage with views other than their own, to face disagreement, to be challenged, to be asked to account for their views, and to make reasoned arguments. Instructors must make room for this kind of discussion, and students must seek it out. Any move to disengage oneself from the task or to push another away from it disrespects the text, harms the collective inquiry, and reduces the class’s chance of learning. Seminar asks students to learn to recognize and respond with empathy to cultural, social, and personal differences as they arise from the text and from discussion. Seminar thrives on and fosters empathy—self-respect and respect for each of the others, humans and texts.