Below are descriptions of the First Year Seminars open to new students (except those in the College Honors program which are designated IDFY 102 on another link). IMPORTANT: These classes are limited to 18 students. Thus, it is very likely that you may not be able to register for your first choice. Keep trying.... there are many excellent choices!

Note: All of the First Year Seminars have a common reading, Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World, by Tracy Kidder. You must purchase this book during the summer and read it before arriving on campus in the Fall. To purchase the book online, go to the Messiah College Main Page and click on Shop Online Bookstore. Information will be there for purchasing the common text for all First Year Seminars.

C. S. Lewis: The Shadowlands and Space Trilogy
(#1216 IDFY 101 MWF 8:00-8:50a with Timothy Whitmoyer)
One of the best known Christian apologists of the 20th century, Clive Staples Lewis authored an astounding number and variety of books. This seminar surveys Lewis' theological and apologetic works, as well as his novels, to assess unity of his scholarly intellect and Christian faith. In addition, the study of biographies consider the personal side of a man who, according to a contemporary, "had a rare gift of making righteousness readable."

The Impact of Invention on Society
(#1217 IDFY 101 MWF 9:00-9:50a with Carl Erikson)
Students will study the impact that inventions have had on society, especially the 20th and 21st centuries. Discussions, videos, non-technical readings, and writing assignments will focus on several inventions and their effects on the family, the church, the environment, ethics, politics, and economics. Through this seminar students will critically evaluate both positive and negative changes in daily societal life as a result of inventions. Creative projects will be required.

Monsters
(#1220 IDFY 101 TR 2:45-4:00p with Julie Keenan)
Our word monster derives from the Latin, "monstrer" -- to show. What do monsters show us? They have taken on many different shapes in the history of western European cultures, and in this course, we will attempt to understand and interpret them, and to consider what they tell us about ourselves and our culture. We will look at monsters in literature, including Beowulf, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Frankenstein, Dracula, and Zombies, as well as in some visual media, in art and in movies.

Reading and Writing as Inklings
(2 sections #2047 IDFY 101 MWF 10:00-10:50p or #2048 IDFY 101 MWF 11:00-11:50a with Christine Perrin)
This course will read some seminal work written by CS Lewis and other members of the Inklings writers group which met and published during 1930-1950. We will seek to practice some of the habits which this influential group of writers cultivated together, to great effect.

Science Fiction and Society
(#1899 IDFY 101 MWF 11:00-11:50a with Jim Makowski)
Literature and film: rare reflections of the time and society during which they were created. Why did the original broadcast of "War of the Worlds" have such an impact on the people of the United Sates? How did the re-make, starring Tom Cruise portray a different America? How do films such as "Minority Report" or "Children of Men" reflect and represent society when they were released? This seminar examines science fiction as a genre, and how its various forms reflect the society, culture, politics, and economics of the 1950's to present day. If you love Sci-Fi, this seminar is for you!

Marxism, Modernism, Postmodernism
(#1804 IDFY 101 MWF 11:00-11:50a with Norman Wilson)
Social theorists from Marx to the postmodernists have sought to change the world from a decidedly atheistic position. Whether Christians like or loathe these theorists, the ideas have had a profound influence on contemporary society. We will consider the complexities and ambiguities of these theories from a Christian perspective.
A House Divided: Slavery and American Thought before the Civil War
(#1241 IDFY 101 MWF 11:00-11:50a with Paul M. Rego)
In this course, students will use speeches, editorials, sermons, and court decisions to examine political, economic, religious, and legal thinking about slavery on the eve of the Civil War. Specifically, we will examine the key thinkers in the debates over American slavery, their main arguments for and against the “peculiar institution,” the various proposals regarding the spread of slavery (immediate abolition, national slavery, popular sovereignty, and free-soil), and finally, how debate over these different options led to southern secession and civil war.

Christianity: Past, Present, and Future
(2 Sections #1222 IDFY 101 MWF 11:00-11:50a or #1648 IDFY 101 MWF 12:00-12:50p with Milton Gaither)
How did we get from the book of Acts to the 30,000 denominations of today? Why do Christians disagree about so many issues, and who’s right? What role is the Church playing in the world? What role should it play? Is the U.S. secularizing? Is Christianity growing? What will the future hold for the faith? In this class we’ll try to answer these and many other questions about Christianity, along the way reading some of the most exciting and current literature on these themes and giving you many opportunities to do independent research on topics you choose.

Christianity and Culture in the World of Late Antiquity
(#1231 IDFY 101 MWF 12:00-12:50p with David Pettegrew)
Christianity originated as a small religious sect in a distant province of the Roman Empire and had by the 7th century AD transformed the Roman world. In this seminar we will explore the relationship of Christianity and Roman culture as it developed between the 2nd and 7th centuries AD. How did Christianity influence Roman society and how did the Roman world color the character of Christian faith and practice? Our discussions will center around the numerous Christian texts of the period.

Half of our Family Earns $2 a Day
(#1228 IDFY 101 MWF 12:00-12:50p with Anne Marie Stoner-Eby)
Most of the growth of the body of Christ is now in the global “South.” How do we respond when so many Christians are among the half of the world that lives on $2 or less a day? In this seminar, we will learn about dynamic Christian churches in other countries, explore why so many are poor economically, discuss what Jesus and the prophets have to say about poverty and injustice, and investigate the exciting ways in which Christians around the globe are working together to “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:25).

Let The Children Come
(#1652 IDFY 101 TR 1:00-1:50p with Donald Murk)
This course will explore the world of children and examine the treatment of children in our society today. Students will read from a variety of sources and will reflect on their readings through their assigned writings. Biblical mandates regarding children will be examined and proposed solutions for change will be discussed. Additionally, students will explore their own childhood and reflect on the aspects of “growing up” through journal reflection.

That’s What Little Girls Are Made Of
(#1226 IDFY 101 TR 1:20-2:35p with Kristen Hansen-Kieffer)
Male and female roles in American society have changed and evolved over the years. This course will examine and explore the many roles that women have assumed throughout US history. Through various readings, videos, discussions and field trips, students will begin to see how roles have been given to women. Students will also explore how the church has established roles for women and how that fits with Gods intentions for them.

Strengthening Families through Play
(#2101 IDFY 101 MWF 1:00-1:50p with Erin Boyd-Soisson)
This course will highlight how shared play and leisure activities among family members are important for strengthening families and the bond between family members from a Christian perspective. Research shows that families who spend quality leisure time together, have stronger relationships, which can make families more resilient during times of stress. Thus, this course aims to help students identify the characteristics of strong families and understand how family play and leisure activities can contribute to those characteristics. Finally, because families encompass a wide range of economic backgrounds this course will focus on cost effective ways to strengthen families.
Skeptical Shakespeare
(#1221 IDFY 101 MWF 1:00-1:50p with Samuel Smith)
Everyone knows Shakespeare dramatizes exciting stories in beautiful language, but few are aware that Shakespeare also
philosophizes with intense interest in many of his plays. In this seminar we will explore this philosophical Shakespeare in
close readings of three or four plays (Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, and/or Measure for Measure and King Lear) while
reading his favorite philosopher, the sixteenth-century French essayist, Michel de Montaigne. Our task will be more to
think with Shakespeare than about Shakespeare, and so we will not be writing about Shakespeare, but writing to respond
to the meaningful and dynamic life questions his plays investigate dramatically. Shakespeare’s primary concern is with
human life and experience, and that will be our primary concern as well.

The Philosophy of C. S. Lewis
(2 Sections #1662 IDFY 101 MWF 2:00-2:50p or #1653 IDFY 101 MWF 3:00-3:50p with David Schenk)
This course involves detailed studies of many of Lewis’ most renowned essays in philosophical theology and Christian
apologetics. Some attention is given to his Narnia books, too, but the emphasis is on his explicit defenses of Christian
orthodoxy.

Frontier Encounters
(2 sections - #1230 IDFY 101 TR 8:00-9:15a or #1232 IDFY 101 TR 10:30-11:45a with Larry Lake)
Human experiences at the mysterious edges of knowledge have long been the subject of literature and of intellectual
inquiry. This course will use maps, videos, letters, historical accounts, poetry, fiction, and discussions to explore contacts
across cultural, linguistic, geographical, and psychological frontiers in Christian missionary endeavors, ancient Polynesian
navigator’s expeditions, colonial exploitations, and the experiences of students beginning a college education.

Alternatives to Violence
(#1225 IDFY 101 TR 10:30-11:45a with Eric Seibert)
There are many ways to resolve conflict and stop oppression that do not involve resorting to violence. This course
examines some of these alternatives to violence by considering a broad range of nonviolent strategies and stories. We will
consider practical ways nonviolence can be utilized effectively in various situations, whether responding to a personal
threat or attempting to remove a dictator from power. Some attention is also given to discussing biblical perspectives on
nonviolence.

The Chosen Road (Service Learning Sections)
(2 sections - #1233 IDFY 101 TR 10:30-11:45a or #1235 IDFY 101 TR 1:20-2:35p with Helen Walker)
How do we walk down a road which we create as we go? How do we become more adept at that daily, highly risky
enterprise? This seminar will examine the "journey toward the authentic self" through autobiography, service learning,
and examining our own lives in creative ways.

Assessing Health Claims
(#2046 IDFY 101 TR 11:55a-1:10p with Joan Sotherden)
Supplements, herbals, diets, drugs, alternative medicine, faith, prayer, exercise, foods … We’re bombarded by products
and promises that claim to improve our health and wellness. What works? What doesn’t? In this seminar, students will
explore the answers to these questions, critique health-related information and advertisements, and gain the skills
necessary to make healthy choices based on current information and valid research.

Doing Justice, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly with Others (Service Learning Section)
(#1227 IDFY 101 TR 11:55a-1:10p with Chad Frey)
As in all First Year Seminar courses, this course is primarily designed to help you write, read, and think at a collegiate
level. As a service-learning course, we will learn these important skills not only by reading and discussing key texts on
service and hospitality in class, but by "reading" and reflecting on service experiences outside of class as well. Throughout
the semester, you will engage in approximately 20 hrs of service to the community. This service will not only empower
community partners to reach their goals in a variety of contexts but will also satisfy many of the educational objectives of
the course as you reflect on your experiences.
Spiritual Autobiography: The Art and Practice of Remembrance, Representation, and Revelation
(#1224 IDFY 101 TR 1:20-2:35p with Cynthia Wells)
Spiritual autobiography is both a literary genre and a spiritual practice. Situated in time and place, autobiographers reveal how they make sense of themselves, of the world, and of God. This seminar examines historical as well as contemporary spiritual autobiographies, including the writing of Saint Augustine, Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Merton, Frederick Buechner, Anne Bradstreet, and Kathleen Norris. This course explores the elements of autobiography - the art of invention, the effort of remembrance, the practice of representation, and the craft of composition. The seminar culminates in students’ composing their personal narratives of faith.

Chocolate
(#1223 IDFY 101 TR 1:20-2:35p with Susie Stanley)
The focus is on chocolate. We will write about chocolate and examine chocolate academically from various disciplines, such as history, archeology, religion, economics, health, and ethics.

A Small, Good Thing: Perspectives on the Short Story
(2 sections #1234 IDFY 101 TR 1:20-2:35p or #2197 IDFY 101 TR 2:45-4:00p with Fabrizio Cilento)
The short story is a brief fiction written in prose that includes the same narrative elements found in the novel and the novella. The constricted length (usually between 500 and 15,000 words) forces writers to exploit language to the fullest, to stress significant characters and scenes rather than to treat exhaustively, to imply rather than explain. The result is a noticeable intensity. Some of most precious gems of the last century’s literature are found where the highest degree of invention and thought is contained in a few pages. Texts include works by Franz Kafka, Ernest Hemingway, Italo Calvino, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Philip K. Dick, Raymond Carver, Donald Bartheleme, David Foster Wallace, and Rick Moody.

Media in America
(#1240 IDFY 101 TR 2:45-4:00p with Lois Beck)
The seminar provides a critical examination of media content and how it impacts both American society and the individual. Critical thinking exercises, and analyses of ads, news reporting, and television genres help develop a Christian perspective of the media.

From Hollywood to Timbuktu: African Screenings
(#2242 IDFY 101 TR 4:10-5:25p with George Beck)
This seminar will examine the ways in which Africa and Africans have been depicted in film, over time, from two perspectives: African and Western. Expository essays, from descriptive to comparative to persuasive, focusing on themes covered in the class, will give the student opportunities to clarify and organize ideas.

Bob Dylan: I’m Not There
(#2253 IDFY 101 TR 11:55-1:10p with Jeff Rioux)
Bob Dylan has been called America’s best songwriter, one of the 100 most important people of the 20th century, and the spokesman for his generation. Conversely, he has been called an opportunist, a fake, and a sellout, criticisms which all try to make sense of the many turns he has taken during his career, from protest singer to psychedelic rocker to country balladeer to born-again Christian. In this course, we will examine all of the stages of Bob Dylan career, and consider how his artistic decisions reflect changes in American society.

Borderlands (Reserved for Martin Scholars)
(2 sections #2045 IDFY 101 or #1229 IDFY 101, both TR 2:45-4:00p with Emerson Powery & Jean Corey)
This seminar will examine the future of diversity through the notions of borderlands - that place where diverse cultures, races, classes, and religions occupy the same space. Using film, literature, essays and our own personal stories, we will explore identity, otherness and the possibilities for building bridges across differences. Our hope is that our work and study together will create space where we can begin imagining a world without borders. This seminar is designed for and limited to Martin Scholars.