



2026 National Seminar Descriptions

“Chemistry of Cooking”



Gary Brudvig

Professor of Chemistry and of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry
Yale University

Do you want to teach science that is relevant to everyday experiences? Look no further than your kitchen. We all are familiar with cooking. Yet, most people do not realize that cooking is chemistry. The aim for this seminar is to discuss the science related to cooking. Cooking offers a wealth of hands-on activities and opportunities to learn about chemistry. In this seminar, we will explore questions such as: Why does baked bread smell so good? and What makes popcorn pop? Learning about the Chemistry of Cooking is a great way to make science relevant to the everyday lives of our students.

“Latinx Histories, Cultures, and Communities”



Albert Laguna

Associate Professor of Ethnicity, Race & Migration and American Studies
Yale University

This seminar will explore some of the central themes and issues that have shaped the experiences of Latino/a/x/e populations in the U.S. The main areas of inquiry that this seminar will address include: U.S.-Latin American relations; the history of ethnic labels; the formation of transnational communities and identities; the politics of language and bilingualism; race, class, and ethnicity; gender and sexuality; political and social movements; geographic space and localities; literature; and media and popular culture.

“Resistance from Aristotle to Star Wars”



Feisal Mohamed

Professor of English
Yale University

This seminar unpacks several keywords of our moment: “tyrant,” “dictator,” “resistance.” We hear them often, and often without a great deal of thought. Tyranny, in fact, has a specific meaning, one influentially articulated by Aristotle and at the heart of ideas of political order and legitimate resistance. Though noble and necessary, resisting tyranny is both symptom and expression of a wrench in right order. This seminar begins with key classical and Renaissance sources, but also aims to show that resistance to tyranny is not an impulse of the Western tradition alone.

“The Kids are not the Threat”



Rod Ferguson

William Robertson Coe Professor of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Professor of American Studies
Yale University

This seminar links the anti-CRT, anti-DEI, anti-LGBTQ, and the contemporary suppression of student movements to the crackdown on social movements and youth rebellions in the nineteen sixties and seventies. The seminar looks at how the young people linked their personal transformations to critiques of militarization, homophobia, transphobia, settler colonialism, racism, patriarchy, genocide, etc. show how the U.S. government and U.S. corporations formed alliances to control not only demands for social transformation but also young people’s interests in self-transformation.

“Asian American History and the Making of the US Immigration System”



Mary Lui

Professor of American Studies & History
Yale University

This seminar explores the 19th- and 20th-century histories of Asian exclusion to understand the development of our modern-day immigration system and its enforcement. The seminar roughly covers the period from the late 18th century into the late 20th century and track patterns of migration from Asia as shaped by U.S. immigration policies and geopolitics. We will also look at the ways in which Asians and Asian Americans confronted Asian exclusion to build lives, families, and communities.

“Asking Questions in Biology”



Paul Turner

Rachel Carson Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Yale University

This seminar explores what it means to ask a meaningful question in biology and examines how biological discovery comes through proposing ideas that are supported or refuted, which is the only way to advance overall scientific knowledge. We will examine why people are naturally curious, and how biological science can be a highly rewarding career, even if most of your ideas about biology are ultimately proven wrong. Throughout the seminar we will relate these discussions to the philosophy of asking questions, and the social and ethical issues that arise in association with the fear of being perceived as “wrong.”