Exploring Self, World, & Social Change (2 sections available)
Explores the interconnections between self-knowledge, understanding of the broader world, and social change. We will focus on how individual growth and greater cultural awareness can lead us to become change agents—people who work to create a better world.

Problem Solving for Sustainability
Students explore personal identity, address a major sustainability problem using research and persuasive writing, and discuss future goals for living out a sustainability ethos. The course considers how solving sustainability problems requires creative connections between science, ecology, arts, and the humanities.

Identities, Diversity, & Justice
Explores the nature of cultural/social diversity with emphasis on personal identity, identification with others, and social (in)justice. By understanding and empathizing with others’ perspectives, students will clarify and evaluate their own perspectives, gaining more informed approaches to engaging with diversity.

Advancing Equity through STEM
Explores how the arts and sciences converge to creatively solve issues of equity and access in education. The common reading, Medicine in Translation, shows how Dr. Danielle Ofri learns that solutions for her patients’ problems extend beyond their physical ailments. The ingenuity and innovation evident in Dr. Ofri’s journeys with her patients can also enhance our own life journeys through social problems.

The Grass Is Always Greener
Examines the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of migration. We will explore in detail migration policies that let some foreigners in while keeping others out, the effects of migration on the American economy and workers, brain drain and brain gain, cultural assimilation, cultural diversity and xenophobia.

Latinos in Popular Culture
Through literature, film, performance and graphic arts, and music from hip hop to rock en español, this course considers how Latina/o artists, musicians and writers have historically rethought citizenship, identity, and culture. We will emphasize how national geography shapes regional identities and cultures — between the maps that nations draw and the cultural forms that cut across them.

“Be the Change…”
...you wish to see in the world.” These words, attributed to Gandhi, describe people from history and people from now, from nearby and from around the world, people of faith and people with little faith—all who will help us think about who we might be as agents of change.

Discovering Citizenship
As citizens, we engage a world infused with culture, politics, economics, technology, science, and nature. The course helps you find your own path as a citizen through this interconnected, interdependent world. On the way, we practice citizenship during class on Fridays by bowling with persons supported by the Christian Opportunity Center in Pella. It costs each student $4 per week to bowl.

Why We Walk
Examines the science, history, culture, and politics of walking: as pilgrimage, protest, and pedestrian transportation; for fitness, fun, and forced migration; on treadmills, trails, streets, and sidewalks. Explores reflections on walking from artists, activists, monks, migrants, physicians and philosophers. Culminates with a sustainability project to promote walking on campus and in the community.

How to Survive a Crisis: Role-Playing the Past to Solve Our Present
What if we could relive the past and use that experience to improve our own world? We will leave the 21st century, take on the roles of key historical figures, and actively participate in “making history” by dealing with the very same crises they faced. Upon returning to the 21st century, we will then apply the insights we have gained from the past to our own crises today.

Eidos: Big Ideas
Eidos, which is Greek for “idea,” will explore the natural world and human nature through critical and evidence-based thinking. Topics include artificial intelligence, the Zika virus, and overpopulation.
What Is Your Body?
Is it a vessel, a container for “you”? Is it a temple, to be cared for and treated with reverence? Or is it merely a bag of bones, an organism? We’ll grapple with that question from a variety of perspectives: physical, psychological, artistic, medical, ethical, philosophical, and religious.

Creativity and Innovation
Where do new ideas come from? Can creativity be developed? As part of Central’s year of Creativity and Innovation, this seminar will explore creativity in the context of the liberal arts, drawing on insights from across the arts and sciences.

Everyday (Super)Heroes: Order & Chaos
We will discuss the struggle between good and evil as a motivation for individual and societal behavior. Through superhero cinema and literature we will examine the impact of individual choices on social change and what constitutes heroism in everyday life.

Identities & Stereotypes
A fine line separates the individual and group identities we claim from the stereotypes ascribed to us by the popular media. This class will examine how groups defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion have been portrayed in American films over the past century, and the real-world consequences of those portrayals. We will employ insights from cultural studies, film theory, and religious studies.

Creativity, Humor, & Liberal Arts
Explores the benefits of creativity and humor in liberal arts education. What is creativity? Where does it come from? How can one maintain creative thought and action throughout life? How is creativity enhanced by humor? To what degree and how, together, do they both result in more effective and innovative thought and problem solving?

Energy, Elections, & the Environment
Critically analyzes energy policy and data-driven decision making. Topics include energy production, alternative energy, disasters, security, and global climate change.