Meanings and Mysteries of Names
Spring 2020
Robin Dizard

Meets Wednesdays **STARTING FEBRUARY 12** at 1 p.m.—2:30 p.m. in Gordon 1 at “The Social”

The course explores the name: the history, the lore and creativity that shape the small piece of language which is our very own.

**February 12:** Myths and History about the Beginnings of Language — the tower of Babel, Adam names the animals; what cave art can signify about the origins of language; how language may have been invented

**February 19:** Proto Indo-European (PIE) language (a best guess), European languages, English across the ages and ideas about why languages change and how, with examples such as a charm against dragons, and Caedmon’s hymn

**February 26:** Names, ancient and modern; first names and surnames; antonomasia, or changes between common nouns and proper names; a strange connection between names and taxes; and why aren’t babies named Aelfthrid anymore?

**March 4:** Metaphors, metonyms, opposites, rhymes and epithets (otherwise known as calling people names); why this habit of making up nicknames may matter in the larger scheme of things

**March 11:** the McGurk effect and Lady Mondegreen (or, “I led the pigeons to the flag of the United States of America”); and what is the difference between a dialect and a language? Pseudonyms, a.k.a. fake names

**March 18:** **Spring Break** No classes meet

**March 25:** Armes Parlantes, a.k.a. the art of heraldry, making names into pictures; techniques of the rebus
April 1: Hiding the name: the technique of the riddle, with examples from past and present

April 8: Names and magic; why do we have swear-words; what makes some words taboo?

April 15: Special cases: African Americans, Jewish names, Amerindians, women's names

April 22: Pseudonyms and aliases and secret languages

April 29: Grand Finale: Are you well named?