Failure is ubiquitous. No matter what the endeavor, it is always a possibility. But it is also through failure that we are able to learn how to succeed. In this course, six different experts will poke and prod the different facets of failure in an attempt to better understand our relationship to it. Covering business, science, politics, sports, society, and the performing arts, we will examine failures—past and present—and how failing can be a useful tool for personal, professional, and societal growth.
A Celebration of Failure
MyLibraryU Short Course

Main Library • 301 York Street
Thursdays, January 27–March 3, 6:30 p.m.

WEEK 4 • FEBRUARY 17
Society
“Towards a ‘More Perfect Union’: Race, Failure, and Social Progress”
Presented by Dr. Bailey Thomas

This class discusses how our fear of failure ultimately impedes collective efforts in working towards establishing a racially equitable society. Many people find discussions about race to be extremely fraught and divisive, which is usually expressed as a fear of “saying the wrong thing.” This discomfort that arises when thinking and talking about racial inequity and injustice, I propose, arises from a collective social failure to be sensitive and attentive to racial privilege and oppression.

PRESENTER BIO:
K. Bailey Thomas (They/Them) is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Louisville. Their work focuses on social epistemology, Black American Political Theory and Philosophy, Black American Feminist Thought, Africana Philosophy, and Critical Philosophy of Race. They are currently working on a monograph about racial politics, ignorance, and social progress.

WEEK 5 • FEBRUARY 24
Science
"Failing Up: Descartes and the Origins of Neuroscience"
Presented by Dr. Guy Dove

We often think of science as the result of a gradual process of improvement. On this view, partially successful theories are replaced over time by ever more successful ones. In this class, I argue that deeply flawed theories—which even contemporaries immediately recognize as failures—can influence and encourage scientific investigation and thinking. Descartes’ hydrodynamic conception of neurophysiology provides a specific example of how it is possible to “fail up” in science.

PRESENTER BIO:
Prof. Dove’s research falls under the category of philosophy of psychology, broadly construed, and contains both philosophical and empirical elements. From 2003-2004, Prof. Dove served as a post-doctoral fellow in the Developmental Neuropsychology and Electrophysiology Lab at the University of Louisville. After this training, he taught in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Louisville from 2004 until 2008. From 2008 on, he has been a member of the Philosophy Department.

WEEK 6 • MARCH 3
Performing Arts
“Failure Is Success.”
Presented by Gregory Maupin

It’s a common rule of physical comedy: a successful fall on the keister requires that you know how a real pratfall looks—and feels. And who are more qualified to find laughs in the foibles of daily human behavior than those prone to such…foblings, I guess? (This, by the way, means everyone on Earth is qualified.) Join actor/creator and physical comedy teacher Gregory Maupin for an evening of slapstick recognition that only by identifying patterns of “wrong” can we even begin to identify what “right” might look like.

PRESENTER BIO:
Gregory Maupin is an actor/creator who has taught workshops and classes in movement, physical comedy, clown performance, commedia dell’arte, and directing. He is the dramaturg/text coach as well as an actor with Kentucky Shakespeare, has also performed locally with Actors Theatre of Louisville (most recently as Scrooge) and other companies, and has adapted comedies of Moliere, Aristophanes, and Shakespeare for production. With his wife, Abigail Bailey Maupin, he is half of the Prohibition-inflected ukulele duo Rannygazoo and in 2004, co-founded Louisville’s Le Petomane Theatre Ensemble, which produced twenty-odd original pieces through 2014. He trained at Dell Arte International, a school of physical theater in northern California.