Honors Seminar Descriptions Fall 2016

HON410-1001
R 2:30-5:15pm
Maria Jerinic, PhD
Instructional Leadership

This seminar is substantive introduction to peer techniques effective in leading university-level students in self-motivated exploration of the world of knowledge. Restricted to Honors College students accepted as peer instructors for HON 105.

HON 410-1002
MW 11:30-12:45p
Western Legal Traditions
John Valery White, J.D.

This course will survey western legal traditions, the differences among them, and the systems that have emerged to enforce them. The two main traditions, the Civil Law and the Common Law provide the basis for legal systems of most sovereign nations. From them have emerged significant systems of international law governing human rights, relations between states, and international commerce. So influential have the Civil Law, the Common Law, and International Law been that these legal traditions and the systems for enforcing their proscriptions have come to represent what we understand as “law.” This course will review the origins and assumptions of the Civil Law and Common Law traditions. Students will be asked to compare and contrast the Civil Law with the Common Law and the related administrative and procedural systems associated with them. We will review the emergence of international law as an extension of these systems. Throughout we will consider the consequences of the dominance of western legal traditions as well as nascent challenges to the dominance of western legal traditions in recent years.

HON410-1003
MW 1:00-2:15p
The Discourse of Contagion: Terrorism, Immigration, and….Zombies?
Tim Gauthier, PhD

One need only look at recent news headlines to see that the trope of contagion has been used to explain everything from the increase in gun violence, to the volatility of economic markets, to the refugee crisis in Europe. The advent and progression of globalization has given rise to a number of anxieties and fears, many of which are revealed in this near-ubiquitous use of this trope. One might say these are globalization-related fears; in expanding the number of networks to which we are connected we have also made ourselves increasingly vulnerable.
We now find the fear of contagion expressed in our political rhetoric about immigration and terrorism, but also in popular culture with a resurgence of post-apocalyptic tales and outbreak narratives, including those which make part of what has been termed the “zombie renaissance.” This course will examine this trope in its various manifestations and seek to gauge the extent of this phenomenon, delving into the various forms of discourse that serve to express our innermost fears of contagion but also, more important, a host of other equally pressing concerns. Most significant, this propensity reveals a concern with preservation of the self (or items connected to the self) and the probability of being contaminated by the other. Thus, the course will also probe the extent to which the discourse of contagion problematizes the possibility of empathy and our ongoing endeavors to connect with a variety of others.

HON 410-1004
T 2:30-5:15pm
We Are What We Eat: Contemporary Food Studies
William Doyle, PhD

This course will explore how food is grown, marketed, sold, cooked, eaten, and discussed. Food studies is—by nature—an interdisciplinary field, drawing on work from the social and natural sciences as well as the humanities. We will focus on humanities-based methods, reading, discussing, and analyzing a variety of texts to examine topics like animal ethics, local foods, farm labor, food celebrity, nutrition, and the all-you-can-eat buffet. Class sessions will include lectures by chefs, economists, and food writers, and we will also visit local farms, food banks, markets, and restaurants.

HON 410-1005
M 5:30-8:15p
Medical Fiction and the Physician
Russ Gollard, M.D

The rigor and breath required for the successful completion of a premedical education and medical education would seem to leave little space for a thoughtful study of the humanities. However, premedical advisors and medical school themselves, as well as society at large, desire physicians to ultimately be humanistic in their approach to patients. The pressures on the new physician today – which include ethical concerns, monetary concerns and balancing the professional with the personal – would seem to all demand that a foundation which involves at least some study of the humanities – including literature, philosophy and the arts Our seminar will focus on fiction and part that medicine plays in it. Though we focus on illness, we will focus on different vantage points from which illness is viewed. Specifically, we will look at the training of physicians, illness as it is experienced by patients and loved ones, and finally, and perhaps most poignantly, we will look at the limitations of modern medicine. We will look at the way death is treated in the novel and novella, particularly the death of individuals in youth or mid-life. The sheer number of reading required is large; hence, emphasis will be placed on classroom discussion of assigned works. All students should keep a notebook in which reactions and queries are recorded. This will help us make good use of what time we have together in the classroom. After the first two weeks, students will be assigned to lead classroom discussions on a weekly basis.
HON 410-1006  
TR 11:30-12:45p  
"If you don't have anything nice to say...": Satire and Society  
Anne Stevens, PhD

This course will examine the role of satire in commenting upon social and political issues. From antiquity to the present day, satirists have used humor, irony, parody, and other tools to call attention to political corruption, injustice, and hypocrisy. In this class we will study some memorable works of verbal and visual satire while also drawing upon a range of contemporary examples, particularly during the run-up to the 2016 presidential election. Authors studied may include Aristophanes, Petronius, Jonathan Swift, Jane Austen, Ralph Ellison, and George Saunders.

HON 410-1007  
TR 1:00-2:15p  
The Science and Politics of Climate Change  
Michael Pravica, PhD

Today, we are bombarded with stories and discussion about ongoing climate change - mostly by nonscientists - in a world where destructive climate change is becoming increasingly apparent. This is unfortunate as critical decisions will need to be made by our leaders who are largely not versed in the science of climate change but which will impact us all. In this course, we will examine the physical nature of climate change from a scientific perspective. The mechanisms of atmospheric warming via greenhouse gas emissions will be discussed as will the potential consequences of this rapid changes for all life on our planet. Mechanisms for slowing the climate change will also be discussed. Finally, some of the media and political commentary on this subject will be discussed to illustrate the dangers of scientific illiteracy among the public and the leaders it elects.

HON 410-1008  
MW 10:00-11:15am  
Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: How Modern Transportation Changed American Culture  
Dan Bubb, PhD

This course will examine how technology and transportation reshaped and redefined American culture. It will especially look at the pivotal role commercial aviation and airports played in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as airlines added larger and faster passenger planes, offered more flights, and airports built multi-billion dollar international terminals to meet the growing needs of domestic and international travelers. As the United States continues to compete in a global aviation market, we will explore many themes including the growing challenges it faces as markets in Asia, Europe, and South American continue to proliferate.
Those who study medicine often seek certainty in their understanding, but medicine is not a pure science. It is also an art, and art is inherently ambiguous. The course “Medicine: Problem Solving in an Atmosphere of Uncertainty” explores the interaction between the basic sciences that underpin medical practice and the environments in which those sciences are applied. This contextual approach draws in elements of biology, the social sciences, and bioethics.

“Medicine: Problem Solving in an Atmosphere of Uncertainty” approaches the subject by analyzing and deconstructing two historical case studies. This platform enables and informs examination of uncertainty in medicine today, including modern bioethical dilemmas associated with personalized medicine, and the impact of advanced technology on medical treatments and health economics.

The course includes lectures, interactive sessions, teamwork, case studies, and guest lectures. Specific topics will include the mindset of effective learning, teamwork, feedback methods, and case-based group discussions of medicine. Students must participate actively in both class discussion and writing assignments. There are no bystanders in this course. Registration is limited to 9 students who need to apply to be admitted to this course. It is not required that students be from any specific major and there are no pre-requisites.

This course addresses the perennial question about the role our ideas about God should play in organizing our collective lives with one another. The course surveys classical works from the Western theological tradition, paying specific attention to what theories of public communication emerge from their discourses on both God and the Good.

What does acting have to do with where I’m going? Quo Vadis? And since we’re on the subject, let’s just be HONEST about what we want out of life. Once you leave UNLV you are going to do and be whatever and whomever you like. Right? Are you able to articulate those two? How do you project yourself manifesting the two? The road to where you want to go in your life seems to lie in the arena of your chosen field of study. Yet you may have questions about such matters as goals, obstacles, excellence, integrity, values, happiness, relevance...This course will use the rubrics of classic Stanislavski actors training, and draw striking relationships between how the acting artist’s process creates an effective character and how the artist in you creates an effective future master of the universe. In the words of the great now deceased Shakespeare, creator of Polonius, "All the worlds a stage..."
HON 420-1002  
W 2:30-5:15p  
Sustainability Issues for the 21st Century  
Alfredo Fernandez-Gonzales, M. Arch.

The 21st Century presents humanity with some of the most significant challenges ever faced. Current population growth, along with the predicted effects of climate change, challenge not only our ability to thrive as a species but also the survival of our own culture and institutions. This seminar explores the effects of consumption with respect to the Earth's ability to produce material goods and absorb the waste produced by human activities. The class focuses on the development of new paradigms for the production of goods and services and addresses important issues such as manufacturing practices, the comprehensive design of the built environment, and the continued supply of energy, water, and food. The aim of this seminar is to inspire you to become an agent of change using your own disciplinary perspectives to help construct a radically different world.

HON 420-1003  
TR 1:00-2:15p  
Is it Art? And how should we experience, value, and categorize it?  
Louis Kavouras, MFA

A survey of aesthetic theories of art both classical and contemporary, and an investigation of various ways contemporary artists create, experience, categorize, judge, value and analyze artifacts. This course will use the various sister arts as examples to test theories, propose questions, and develop ways of looking and experiencing art? Questions explored will include: What is the changing purpose of art? What is the difference between artistic intuition and scientific postulation? What is the creative act? Where is the significance in a work of art? Is there such a thing as an aesthetic experience? Is there a difference between art and craft? What is expression? Does art have a language? Is this work of art realistic, expressionistic or formal? How has postmodernism affected the contemporary artist? What value does art have? What does it mean to be an artist?

HON 420-1004  
R 2:30-5:15p  
Japan Cool, Korean Wave: Global Asian Popular Culture  
Richard Miller, PhD

This course examines the peoples of Japan, Korea, and China as consumers, interpreters, and producers of global popular culture: Anime, manga, popular music, martial arts films, television dramas, crime fiction, fashion, and the Internet. We will consider formal and aesthetic issues, industry structures and practices, the efforts governments have made in supporting or suppressing these art forms and the vital role played by the fanbase worldwide in the globalizing process. No prior knowledge of East Asian languages and cultures is required, although there will be opportunities to make use of such knowledge if you have it. Grades will be based on regular participation in class and online, two presentations in class, and a final research project.
HON 430-1001
MW 11:30-12:45p
Latin American Politics
John Tuman, PhD
This course examines the politics of contemporary Latin America. In the first part of the course, we will discuss different types of political regimes in Latin America, theories of democratization, challenges facing Latin America’s new democracies, and the politics of economic reform in the region. The second part of the course provides in-depth case studies of politics in selected countries, with a focus on Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil.

HON 430-1002
TR 10:00-11:15
Soccer and the Making of the Modern World
Cian McMahon, PhD
Over the course of a few weeks in July 2014, over three billion people—almost half the planet—sat down to do the same thing: watch the World Cup tournament. In this course we will use association football (known to Americans as “soccer”) as a new way to learn about how labor, capital, sex/gender, consumerism, social class, national identity, and violence have operated in world history since the mid-nineteenth century. From humble beginnings, soccer has evolved into a twenty-first-century mega-business worth hundreds of billions of dollars. Having removed all hindrances on the free movement of labor, capital, and commodities, it is also a case study of multinational capitalism run rampant. A Nigerian guy plays for an English team owned by a Saudi prince. A Russian oil tycoon owns a Chinese team featuring Argentine players. Korean kids wear Brazilian jerseys to soccer practice in America. And yet, for all the boundary-blurring going on, the sport simultaneously commands fierce loyalties based on “old-fashioned” notions of race, class, gender, and nationality. As such, the history of soccer offers a unique lens on the socio-economic forces that have shaped the modern world over the past century and a half. Effectively communicating one’s ideas in writing is a keystone of the Honors College experience. This seminar will encourage you to hone your analytical and writing skills by emphasizing essay-writing assignments and group discussion. An interdisciplinary collection of readings and source materials will include a few excellent monographs along with some documentaries, contemporary op-ed articles/cartoons, and Among the Thugs, an excellent insider’s view on hooliganism by Bill Buford.

HON 430-1003
R 2:30-5:15p
The Fabulist, Surreal, & Innovative
Jaclyn Costello, MFA
Explore the innovative works of Clarice Lispector, André Breton, and Italo Calvino. We will discuss the realities created & observed by each of these writers so that we may appreciate writing which does not refer back to any authority, tradition, or origin—but rather aims at novelty, originality, and innovation. An example of the type of work we will be reading: Calvino’s Cosmicomics. This collection of fables concerning the origin of Earth is narrated by a one-cell organism called ‘Qfwfq’ who lives in the first protozoan and in all later forms of evolution (including man.) For a full course description, visit the course webpage.
HON 440-1001
W 2:30-5:15p
Black American Public Address
Sara VanderHaagen, PhD

The events of recent months—including the deaths of Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, and Freddie Gray while in police custody—have demonstrated that American racism is not just a thing of the past. Our public discourse following these events has also shown how much we as Americans have to learn about the history of race relations in our country. Knowing how people of the past have addressed these issues can be one tool to help us improve our public discourse about race. In an effort to help us understand this history, this course focuses on one group of people who have contributed significantly to such discourse: black Americans. We will examine speeches given by black American women and men from the early nineteenth century through the twenty-first century. As examples of rhetorical discourse, these speeches worked to shape public opinion on significant issues and to influence the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of the people. The broad objectives of this course are to help students understand and appreciate the use of public discourse in effort to shape public opinion, the relationship between public discourse and the historical context in which it is produced, and the means by which public discourse might be evaluated. To accomplish those objectives, students will examine significant rhetorical acts (both historical and contemporary), place them within their historical contexts in order to understand the rhetorical problem(s) the rhetors faced, and evaluate the strategic choices made by those rhetors in effort to overcome the rhetorical problem(s). Participants will gain an understanding of African American rhetorical traditions through class readings and discussions, and they will gain skills of critical, rhetorical analysis by applying this knowledge in papers and examinations.

HON 440-1002
T 2:30-5:15pm
A History of American Violence:
Michael J. Alarid, PhD

The United States has long held the dubious distinction of being the most homicidal nation among affluent world democratic societies, with a rate four to ten times higher than comparable nations. Violence, especially homicide, has been endemic in the U.S. since the earliest European colonization of the Americas and scholars have long struggled to explain why the United States in particular has remained so homicidal. These same scholars have proposed numerous theories, which include America’s abundance of guns, America’s long history of racial strife, and America’s poverty, which was caused by centuries of unchecked capitalism. However, none of these theories have proven sufficient. In this course we will examine the latest theory that seeks to explain why Americans are so homicidal. We will consider the social, political, and economic factors at play, in addition to how the legal system and lawmakers have attempted to deal with America’s homicide problem. Utilizing Randolph Roth's latest book, American Homicide, we will first explore why Americans resort to murder, both over time and by region. With Roth’s thesis as our framework for understanding homicide, we will transform our enquiry into a study of violence more broadly. We will examine numerous case studies of violence and homicide in American history, first at home and later during times of war. Our journey will take place across time and space: from the 17th to the 21st centuries and from the eastern United States, to the American Southwest, to the islands of Southeast Asia. Ultimately, our goal will be to search for patterns in the history of the United States to uncover why violence is so endemic in American culture.