

Spring 2021 Honors Seminars

HON 410-1001

T/R 1:00-2:15pm (Remote Synchronous)

Community and/or Immunity: Pandemic Fiction and Other Narratives

Dr. Tim Gauthier

"The plague didn't let you in on its rules; they weren't printed on the inside of the box. You had to learn them one by one" (Colson Whitehead, 2012). As COVID-19 made its appearance in early 2020, commentators were quick to point to the benefits of reading fiction as a guide for living in, and through, a pandemic. But do we read pandemic fiction differently *before, during, and after* a pandemic? This course will examine how being in a pandemic radically alters the ways we consider and represent pestilence/infection. In other words, we will question what fictional representations can and cannot tell us about living with a virus, both as individuals and as a community. In the process we will seek to answer a number of questions: How are individual or communal rights reconfigured in this moment of crisis? What anxieties does the pandemic raise, and in what ways do they impact or dictate our actions? How is meaning imposed on the appearance of the virus and its consequences? Finally, what sense of this moment can we derive from the reading of literature?

HON 410-1002

T/R 10:00-11:15am (Remote Synchronous)

Children's and Young Adult Literature

Dr. Bill Doyle

Think about the first book you ever read. How long ago was that and what was it? Now, think about the last book you read. What was it? This course might not cover every student's favorite book or series, but we will read and discuss children's literature classics and as many contemporary young adult (YA) books as we can. We'll consider such questions as why half of those who read these books are adults, what makes a great film or television adaptation, and how book culture persists in the age of streaming video and social media. We'll also explore the various subgenres of graphic storytelling, read and listen to author interviews, and discuss the ongoing challenges to representation and inclusion in children's and YA books. Course assignments include podcasts, book trailers, a critical essay, and at least one creative project.

HON 410-1003

R 2:30-5:15pm

Responding to "Extraordinary Circumstances": What We Can Learn from the Literature of the Blitz

Dr. Maria Jerinic

In difficult times, we might turn to literature to help process our experiences. Doing so may provide personal relief and also inspire our own creative output. Consider the Blitz, the Nazi bombing of the United Kingdom between September 1940-May 1941. Arguably, the outbreak of WWII squelched British creative output and a focus on new artists. However, writers did respond to the Blitz, both during WWII and after, well into the 21st century. Novelist Kate Atkinson explains her interest by describing "the Second World War" as "the last time that very ordinary people were put into very extraordinary circumstances." In order to explore how "ordinary people" coped, we'll read British novels, poetry, and essays written during and after the Blitz. Readings will include work by Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and T.S. Eliot, as well as the following novels: Elizabeth Bowen's *Heat of the Day* (1948), Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), Andrea Levy's *A Small Island* (2004), and Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* (2013). Assignments will include a presentation, a research essay, and a creative project that will allow you to respond to the "extraordinary circumstances" you have found yourself in this past year.

HON 410-1005

T/R 1:00-2:15pm

Lifelong Learning

Dr. Corrin Sullivan

One of the most cited, powerful, and undervalued tools noted by today's leaders of multi-million dollar enterprises and noble laureates is the application of self-motivated lifelong learning skills that go beyond specific knowledge, memorization, and competency in occupational fields. This course delves into the practice of transferable lifelong learning skills essential to an individual's intellectual, wealth, physical and emotional success regardless of occupational interest, situation, or life role. The power of inquiry is refined and explored to help identify and solve problems, develop breakthrough ideas, pursue new opportunities such as entrepreneurship, and expand personal development. Attention is also directed towards the role of lifelong learning in enhancing social inclusion and civic responsibility through the power of asking "Why?"

HON 410-1006

M/W 10:00-11:15am

Physics for Presidents

Dr. Jason Steffen

A class for every major, this course covers the physics that every future leader should know: energy and electricity, weather and weapons, climate and quantum mechanics, information and data, light and space. We will learn how the world works, what it takes to keep it going, and how to judge the merits of proposed programs to fix its problems.

HON 410-1007

T/R 10:00-11:15am (Remote Synchronous)

Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, Friends: The Stories of Virginia Woolf and Elena Ferrante

Dr. Beth Rosenberg

This seminar explores the nuances of female relationships through the writing of the 20th-century writer and feminist Virginia Woolf and the 21st-century bestselling author Elena Ferrante. For Woolf and Ferrante, "sisterhood" between women not only defines their lives but the literary traditions of which they are a part. Their fictional depictions of the deep bonds and deep tensions that run through women's close relationships can help us better understand the attachments and conflicts we have with the women in our own lives.

HON 410-1008

F 8:30-11:15am (Remote Synchronous)

Graphic Medical Stories

Dr. Bryan Blankfield

How to talk about medical maladies is an ongoing challenge for patients and health professionals alike. Since physical pain is only felt individually, it is difficult to adequately convey the severity of one's suffering. Patients may also lack the right medical jargon. In contrast, health professionals often lack the ability to empathize with or listen to their patients, despite their impressive knowledge of human anatomy. In this course we will consider how autobiographical graphic novels on health issues may serve as a means to bridge these communication difficulties. Special attention will be given to scholarship on medical narratives, the comic medium, and how graphic novels are uniquely positioned to educate about health issues.

HON 420-1001

M/W 11:30-12:45pm

Acting Your Way Out of a Paper Bag: Using the Craft of Acting Every Day and Everywhere
Professor Adam Paul

This course is designed to introduce non-actors to the basics of the craft and techniques of acting. We will read foundational texts on modern acting technique and practice those skills in scripted scene work, improvisation and performance. Particular attention will be paid to the application of the actors' skillsets to 'real world' non-theatrical/non-performance settings.

HON 420-1002

T/R 4:00-5:15pm

Staging Power: Music Theater in Western Culture

Dr. Anthony Barone

This course is a survey of music-theatrical works (especially opera, but other forms of music-theatrical spectacle will be examined) from the establishment of court and civic musical theater at the end of the European Renaissance to the present, with particular attention to the expression of different kinds of power and power relations—political, social, sexual, religious, and ethnic. The course will look at works from among experimental Italian operas around 1600; the court operas and ballets of seventeenth-century France; the disruptive comic opera tradition of the eighteenth-century; nineteenth-century theater of revolution, nation-building, and empire; early twentieth-century modernist musical theater; and post-War currents from the later twentieth-century and present day. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach that combines viewing and listening with readings in sociology, history, aesthetics, political theory, and other branches of philosophy. (Musical training and literacy is not required.)

HON 430-1001

W 2:30-5:15pm (Remote Synchronous)

Cinematic Depictions of European Socio-political Conflicts

Dr. Joanna Kepka

Contemporary Europe is experiencing tremendous political, cultural, and economic changes. During the last decade, Europe has been described as both one and many as the region experiences movement toward unification and division. Using film as medium, this seminar examines cultural and political landscapes of post-war European societies. We will explore themes of war and hegemony, religion, territoriality, regionalism, ethno-nationalism, and national and European identity, among others. Throughout the course, we will make connections between the political realities of modern European societies and their cultural representations on screen. This class offers an opportunity to acquaint yourself with the most pressing issues in contemporary European societies through the medium of film.

HON 430-1002

T 2:30-5:15pm (Remote Synchronous)

The Morality of Markets

Dr. David Fott

Capitalism emerged victorious from the Cold War, but today complaints about globalization abound. What morality accompanies a commercial society, and is it worthy of our approval? To begin to answer those questions, we need to know the intellectual roots of commercial society. After spending some time on earlier moral and economic thought (excerpts from Aristotle, the Hebrew Bible, and the Christian New Testament), we will read aloud William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which explores the interworking of religion, morals, and commerce. That play raises questions about what is gained and what is lost when the pursuit of wealth dominates society. Then we will study a founder of modern liberalism, John Locke, and the most famous advocate of commercial society, Adam Smith, to examine the morality that we mainly observe today. Students will need to be online Tuesdays 2:30-5:15pm to participate in sessions by audio and preferably by video as well.

HON 430-1003

Online/Asynchronous

World Mythologies

Dr. Heather Lusty

Mythology (from the Greek *mythos* for story-of-the-people, and *logos* for word or speech, the spoken story of a people) is the study of often sacred tales or fables of a culture (myths) or stories that deal with the human condition, good and evil, human origins, life and death, the afterlife, and the gods. This course is designed to introduce a number of important works of world mythology from the ancient and medieval worlds – up through the folktales of the modern world. We will read literary texts from around the world and focus on how they reveal their literary, historical, cultural, religious, and political contexts. Weekly discussion boards, formal essays, and a visual project are required. Instructor commits to providing at least 50% of the semester's works free via Canvas and online sources.

HON 430-1004

R 2:30-5:15pm (Remote Synchronous)

Genocide: Intervention with Survivors and Global Prevention

Dr. Carlton Craig

This course will examine the psychological, cultural, and societal roots of human cruelty, mass violence, and genocide. We will explore what enables individuals collectively and individually to perpetrate mass cruelty/genocide or to stand by and watch such horrors. The course will cover key concepts and the history of 20th and 21st century genocide, perpetrator psychology, examples of specific genocides, biopsychosocial effects on and intervention with survivors, and prevention.

HON 430-1005

M/W 10:00-11:15am (Remote Synchronous)

Roma Culture

Professor Oksana Marafioti

Introduction to Roma Cultural History begins with the history of Romani arrival in Europe, traces Romani cultural, social, and political presence in Europe and the United States, and ends with a reflection on the importance of contemporary Romani knowledge production. The course consists of weekly lectures and class discussions, as well as guest appearances delivered by renowned Roma artists and scholars. Topics discussed will include the following: identity and historiography, linguistic overview, slavery and the Holocaust, antigypsyism, feminism, intersectionality, and LGBT movements, art, dance, literature, and music overview, and Romani knowledge production.

HON 430-1006

T/R 2:30-3:45pm (Remote Synchronous)

Poetry, World, and Spiritual Thought

Professor Jaclyn Costello

From the ancient Hindu scripture, *Bhagavad Gita*, to the poetry of 17th century mystic, Angelus Silesius, to the existential angst found in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, to the nature-based songs sung by the South American Yawanawa tribe, to *Awakening Shakti* & the Goddess as she appears in her myriad forms, to *The Immortality Key*: a contemporary scholar's take on the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries & the role of sacred plants in the development of Christianity – this class will take you on a fascinating journey through the world of spiritual thinking. Whether or not you enjoy poetry, and whatever your mode of spiritual thinking may be, my hope is that you finish this semester as a more open-minded, informed, interested, conscious, human being. For a final project, you will have the option of responding to one of our themes in an academic or artistic fashion by choosing to create one of the following: research essay, short film or documentary, group of songs, or chapbook of poetry.

HON 440-1001

T 2:30-5:15pm (Remote Synchronous)

The Making of Las Vegas

Dr. Mike Green

This seminar examines the development of Las Vegas, emphasizing the period since World War II. It will examine broader themes in Las Vegas history and how those themes relate to regional, state, national, and international developments. We will focus on the expected— gaming and the mob and civil rights, which are incredibly important, of course— but also, perhaps, the unexpected— the regional environment and the area's medical and occupational health history, to name just two. We will meet online via Zoom, and occasional guest speakers will join us. We may attempt a field trip or two (at no cost to you), depending on you-know-what. You will conduct a research project on an area of Las Vegas history of interest to you, and do some additional writing assignments.

HON 440-1002

Online/Asynchronous

Family Communication and the Hollywood Feature Film

Dr. Rebecca DiVerniero

Families come in many forms. And yet, there are societal expectations for familial makeup, scripts for their interactions and their relational development, inevitably privileging some family forms and members, and marginalizing others. Although we may not consciously realize it, we are constantly receiving messages that impact our understanding and management of our familial relationships. One of these sources is the Hollywood feature film. While it is unlikely that we actively look to feature films to tell us how to live, it is undeniable that they serve both as reflections of our society, as well as social prescriptions for what is “normal” in various contexts. Thus, we can learn much from film about how we as society think about communication. This course will utilize feature film, scholarly readings, class discussions, and writing assignments to allow us to better understand how film both reflects and affects how we think about our families, and how to improve our understanding of these relationships.

HON 440-1003

M/W 10:00-11:15am (Remote Synchronous)

Promoting Social Justice through Psychology

Dr. Jennifer Rennels

For this seminar, we will read and discuss topics related to diversity (the “isms” many individuals experience) and issues of social justice. We will also learn how psychological research and applications of it can be used to study and decrease behaviors related to social injustice. During the second half of the semester, students will work together in small groups to identify an issue in our community and develop a proposal for a community-based project aimed at promoting social justice that will include a way to evaluate the project. A main objective is for you to gain an understanding of how psychology can be used to serve community needs outside of a clinical framework.

HON 440-1004

T/R 8:30-9:45am (Remote Synchronous)

Multicultural Education

Professor Janna Bernstein

This multicultural education seminar will explore the historical, sociological, and philosophical foundations of education with special emphasis on the role of race and ethnicity in the development of the United States and its education system. This course will help students have an increased awareness of their own biases and understand power, privilege, and oppression in relation to social constructs. Students should be able to identify the difference between equality, equity, and justice and the issues of multiculturalism that include age, class, gender, exceptionality, ethnicity, differentiated life styles and life choices, nationality, race, and religion. In the course, we will also establish a constant dialogue between theory and practice, between personal reflections and interpersonal exchange, between feelings, actions and thoughts.

HON 440-1005

Online/Asynchronous

Health Disparities

Dr. Johanna Andrews

This public health course will explore the root causes of health disparities associated with race, ethnicity, social class, and culture in the United States. We will also examine how the social determinants of health impact health outcomes for populations of color. Students will learn research methods and data analysis skills to independently investigate health-related inequities and understand the extent of the health status gap for marginalized groups. Additionally, we will discuss potential solutions to address health disparities and promote health equity, diversity, and inclusion within a public health context.