

Honors College Seminars

Fall 2013



HONR 100: Honors Forum I

Instructors: Simon P. Stacey and Jodi Kelber-Kaye, Honors College

This course introduces students to the academic methods and disciplines as they interact with faculty and creative artists. Students are expected to do and present research, participate in campus activities, and reflect on what it means to be full members of a community of learning.

HONR 200: Being Human: Brain, Mind, & Pieces of You

Instructor: Megan Rivera, Geography and Environmental Systems

Few of us take time to observe our thinking-mind in action--How does it work? What does it do? What are the implications? We will explore these questions, drawing from knowledge developed in philosophy, neurology, evolutionary biology, religion, astronomy, psychology, medicine, pedagogy, anthropology, literature, quantum physics, and physiology. Simultaneously, students will explore the nature of their own minds using a range of techniques, supplementing the course material with direct experience. In addition to weekly assignments, students will design a research experiment to test a student-developed hypothesis related to the course material.



HONR 210: Great Books Seminar I: Narrative, Dramatic and Visual Traditions

Instructor: Ellen Handler Spitz, Honors College Professor of Visual Arts

An introduction to the great books of world literature, religion, philosophy, history, and science from ancient times to the present day. This course will include readings from such works as Genesis, Ramayana, several Greek tragedies, Aristotle's Poetics, Virgil's Aeneid, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and the Arabian Nights.

HONR 300-01: Understanding HIV & AIDS

Instructor: Jodi Kelber-Kaye, The Honors College

This course will focus on the ways in which HIV and AIDS are understood in the US, both in terms of their domestic presence and global manifestations. We will examine biological, policy, artistic, and activist ways of producing knowledge about the virus, and how those knowledges, or understandings, depend on each other for meaning. We will also be looking at how these knowledges are interdisciplinary and, while they depend on each other for their meanings, those meanings are often contradictory or even ultimately untrue. Readings will come from all of these disciplines, but no particular expertise in any of them is required for this course. Besides reading, there will be short and longer writing assignments, and a group project that includes an intervention in cultural expressions of HIV and AIDS.



HONR 300-02: The Literature of Chivalry

Instructor: Gail Orgelfinger, English



This course surveys the historical, cultural, religious, and literary contexts for the concept, ideal, and artistic manifestations of “chivalry.” Chivalry (derived from Old French *chevalerie*, from the Latin for “horse”) is a broader concept than that of aristocratic behavior, and is also very difficult to define. What appear to be strict hierarchical categories in the Middle Ages’ feudal context, divisions in society between “those who fight, those who work, and those who pray” quickly overlap in practice. Noblemen reinvented themselves as desirable but unattainable inspirations for deeds of prowess (to which the Church objected), which led to elaborate codes of conduct and rituals and ceremonies that publicly affirmed allegiance to a lady as often as to a king. Poets early on grasped the appeal of the drama and inherent contradictions of such codes, creating epics, romances, and lyrics that variously praised, mocked, or complicated them. In this course, we will understand how literature, history, and theology simultaneously contributed to the rise, development, and manifestation of “chivalry,” chiefly in England, France, and to a lesser extent, the US, through a reading of primary and secondary materials.

HONR 300-03: Robots and Society

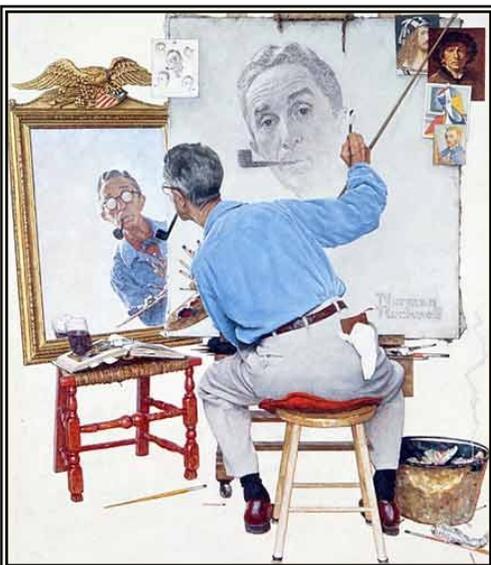
Instructor: Susan Hoban, Goddard Earth Sciences and Technology Center

Robots are becoming an increasingly ubiquitous part of modern society, though ideas about robots date back to at least the era of da Vinci. The objective of this course is to introduce students to concepts related to the use of robots in society. We will delve in technical, ethical, legal and creative ideas surrounding the increasing role of robots in our lives. Students will try their hands at building an extremely simple robot to help them understand some of the realities of robotics and dispel certain misconceptions about how robots make decisions and act on those decisions.



HONR 300-04: Honors Writing By & About Artists

Instructor: Ellen Handler Spitz, Honors College Professor of Visual Arts



Art, in our time, has become a phenomenon that one is expected not merely look at but to think and talk about, and even to write about, especially if one is an artist! Today’s successful artists not only create works but also often present them to the public—both orally and in written form. In this seminar, we shall study different ways in which art (and visual culture more generally) has been responded to and represented not only by visual artists but by critics, novelists, poets, and film makers. The goal of the seminar is to encourage students to think deeply about what art has been and is today (both for artists and viewers) and about how art works, art-making processes, art movements, and aesthetic experiences can be described, interpreted, and explained. Above all, this seminar is devoted to asking what sorts of relations obtain between the two great sign systems of words and images. In that sense, our inquiry is fundamentally philosophical.

This course is also listed as ART 425 and ART 720-01.