Honors Colloquia

Colloquia are open to first-year Honors Program students. Registration for colloquia courses will take place on Wednesday, November 28th at 7:30 a.m.

A 3.00 GPA after the fall semester is required to keep enrollment in Honors colloquia sections.

HONR 290 sections fulfill a University Creative Arts and Humanities breadth (see note)*

HONR 290-080  MWF 10:10AM – 11:00AM
Popular Culture and High Culture: Analyzing and Evaluating Taste
Steve Tague
We make many decisions and choices every day, choices about what to watch, wear, listen to, read, which team to root for and generally, how to spend our dollars and our free time. These choices make up our taste. Our taste has been formed over many years and it could be said that our taste describes us, expresses who we are as an individual and who we are in groups, large and small. Your taste and our taste will be examined in this class through culture that is defined variously as high, popular, folk, and mass. It will include, but not be limited to, the subjects of visual art, theater, newspapers, music, visual media, fiction and sports. The issues we look at inside of those subjects and others will be as contemporary as we can make them, in some cases unfolding as the semester goes. There will be four papers for this class. Two of them will be examinations of a cultural debate of today—gender issues in sports, the culture of “hooking up,” drinking in college, core curriculum, the pressure to decide everything early, etc., issues the student finds upsetting, interesting or confusing. The third will be a response paper to a cultural encounter during the semester. This encounter could be a production at the REP or a visit to the Mechanical Gallery on campus, both part of this course. The fourth will be an examination of the student’s personal taste in cultural consumption. All of the papers will be in the genre or style of creative nonfiction or personal nonfiction.

HONR 290-081  MW 8:40AM – 9:55AM
Délice Williams
Good Company: Ethics, Society, and the Modern Corporation
Modern corporations are much more than economic entities. Politically, culturally, and socially, they operate as powerful agents, exerting undeniable influences in our lives. We may love them. We may hate them. But whether or not we want to admit it, our relationships with them, their products, and their espoused values define much of who we are. Through discussions of essays, articles, documentaries, and works of fiction, this course invites you to reflect on our complex relationships to the modern corporation, paying particular attention to the ethical, social, and political questions to which those relationships give rise. As we explore these questions, we will consider three main figures that structure our perceptions of and interactions with corporate entities: the corporation as hero, as villain, and as (un)ethical citizen. As we look that corporations in these various roles, we will attend to the ways that corporations represent themselves (in documents such as advertisements and press releases). We will also focus on the ways that they are imagined and represented in works of fiction, film, and nonfiction. Course texts include documentaries (The Corporation: Interrogating a Modern Institution); feature films (Promised Land); and excerpts from longer works of fiction (Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People; Dave Eggers’ The Circle) and nonfiction (Naomi Klein’s No Logo).
The notion that science fiction might provide insight into the study of social and political life is not as far-fetched as it initially sounds. Indeed, for a genre purportedly focused on the future, sci-fi has long been recognized for its ability to speak to concerns of the present, from cautionary dystopias of *1984*, *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid’s Tale* to the startling prophetic *Neuromancer* and *Snowcrash*. In Social/Science/Fiction we will explore one theme in particular: the cultural politics of alien encounter. “Alien encounter” in this case refers not to the actual or potential existence of extraterrestrial life, but to encounters with the Other—those marked as outsiders, as less-than-human. The required reading for the course include novels such as *Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card, *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula Le Guin, and *Wild Seed* by Octavia Butler. In reading works of science fiction in conjunction with those of social science, our purpose will be less to seek out new worlds than to strive for a nuanced understanding of our own, and of the fear and wonder that accompany, in the words of astronomer and science fiction author Carl Sagan, contact. We will explore these themes together through class discussion, a course blog, and the writing, workshopping, and revising of a long essay.

The Mafia
Laura Salsini
The Mafia began in Italy in the late 1800s. This course will examine the history of this organization, as well as its depiction in Italian literature, non-fiction accounts, and film. The second part of the course will focus on how the Mafia evolved as it moved into the United States. We will look in particular at how American film directors promulgate or challenge the stereotypes of the Mafia and Italian-American identity in such films as *The Godfather* and *GoodFellas*, among others.

Gods, Heroes, and Superheroes
Alan Fox
We will examine religion and myth by looking at its most modern expression in the Superhero genre. Superheroes are a modern form of mythology, in that religious motifs are prominent in the characters, situations, and ideas presented in these stories. For instance, in the case of Superman, this includes the fact that Superman’s Kryptonian family name, El, is the Hebrew word for any divine being, and he is the only son of a father from a distant planet sent to save humankind, discovered by locals like Moses in his basket of reeds. It is characteristic of the archetypal and mythic nature of comics that characters like Superman and Batman can be reinvented in so many different ways and still retain their power and influence. We will read works by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell about myth and archetype, and movies, graphic novels, and novels including American Gods, Kingdom Come, the Dark Knight Returns, the Ultimates, and Watchmen, among others. Students will write several response papers, two extended essays with rewrites, and a final research paper on the topic of the student’s choosing. Class participation will also be emphasized.

Environmental Humanities: Healing the Planet, Healing Ourselves
McKay Jenkins
The American environmental movement has been underway, in one way or another, for at least 150 years. There have been many great achievements in both conservation and science: vast national parks and wilderness areas; a reduction in industrial pollutants in our water and air; a better understanding of
ecological principals. Yet despite a century and a half of hearty debate over man’s place in the world; we
(and the natural world) still suffer enormous insults to the very foundation of our world: climate change
receives the greatest attention these days, but other troubles are legion: mass species extinctions; vast
chemical pollution of our food and bodies; habitat destruction through suburban sprawl; the destruction of
our mountains for coal power; the list goes on and on. Perhaps what is needed is not merely new policy,
but entirely new ways of thinking about our place in the world. Thankfully, ancient wisdom traditions from
around the globe have much to offer on this subject, and this is where our journey will begin. We will
explore Chinese Taoism; Himalayan Buddhism; Native American ecology; and Christian theology to search
for clues to living more holistic and sustainable lives that are more in keeping with the natural rhythms of
life on earth. Assignments will include weekly two-page forest journals, with 5 page midterm and final
essays. Readings include McKay Jenkins Food Fight, Doug Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home, Helena Norberg–
Hodge, Ancient Futures, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass, and Jonathan Starr, ed. Tao Te Ching.

HONR 291 sections fulfill a University History and Cultural change breadth (see note)*

HONR 291-080  TR 2:00PM – 3:15PM
Roman Archaeology: From Antiquity to Present
Margaret Laird
How did ancient Romans think about artifacts from earlier cultures? How did Renaissance thinkers
understand the ancient city? How do archaeologists today analyze the material remains of ancient societies?
This course traces the development of the discipline of Roman archaeology to reveal how the study of
ancient objects and places changes over time, from the responses of ancient Romans to their "antiquity" to
contemporary methods of excavation and interpretation. Close analysis of texts, images, and objects will
illuminate how interpretations of antiquity reflect the periods in which they were formulated and
developments in other fields like science, anthropology, and art history. We will examine major
archaeological sites such as Rome, Pompeii, and Dura Europos and explore topics such as tourism,
excavation techniques, political propaganda, and Roman archaeology in popular culture.

HONR 291-083    MW 8:40AM – 9:55AM
The Impact of Sports on Race, Culture and Society
Ron Whittington
This course will focus on moments in history from the 1800s to the present where sports played a major
role in forming attitudes and shaping cultures. We will discuss points in time where the very mention of a
sports figure could insight a riot, cause youth to spend enormous sums of money to purchase the latest
styles or brand names, or lead a government to bid and host Olympic events that will ultimately bankrupt
the economy. We will also discuss the impact of sports in the quest for human rights, asking questions
related to equality of gender as well as race. An atmosphere of respect will be present at all times, even
when there are different points of view presented. Reading include: From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports,
Media, and the Color Line by Chris Lamb, University of Nebraska Press (2016). Additional articles, books and
films related to class discussion topic will be assigned as needed.
From Corporate Board Rooms to College Dorm Rooms: Delaware’s Court of Chancery and How it Shapes America
Jonathan Russ

How is it that Delaware became America's corporate capital, the state in which thousands of firms both large and small are incorporated? In large part, the answer has to do with Delaware’s Court of Chancery, an entity established in 1792 that evolved into the single most important court guiding U.S. business affairs. At first blush, it's something of a peculiar entity; it doesn't utilize a jury in reaching decisions, and it traces its roots to English courts predating the American Revolution by centuries. Its judges base their rulings on the concept of equity that might otherwise be unavailable in more rigid courts of common law. And yet, although the Court specializes in matters affecting corporate America, its rulings have had a profound impact upon the University of Delaware as well. To best study Chancery and its sweeping reach, students will read various case histories from the Court, including Parker v U.D. (the case that desegregated the University,) Gebhart v Belton (which became one of four cases that were combined into Brown v Board of Education in which the U.S. Supreme Court found segregated education to be unconstitutional,) Keegan v U.D. (another case ultimately wending its way to the Supreme Court that established the freedom of religious worship on public college campuses,) and Time v Paramount (the case that dramatically reshaped the relationship between shareholders and corporate boards, leading to a wave of corporate mergers and acquisitions in the 1980s and '90s.) In addition to reading landmark cases, students will hear from guest lecturers connected to the Court. Although there will be no exams, students will be expected to participate in class discussions and write several papers.

Tyrants from Oedipus to Hitler
Marcaline Boyd

In this course, we will consider one-man rule from ancient Greece to the modern era by asking, What is a tyrant? This course will begin by comparing ancient and modern theoretical definitions of tyranny and kingship ranging from the philosophical meditations of Plato’s Republic to the political theorist Hannah Arendt. We will then proceed chronologically investigating the larger-than-life tyrants of ancient Greece, depraved and dissolute emperors of Rome, autocrats of early modern Europe – Cesare Borgia, Henry VIII of England, and Napoleon – dictators of the 20th century, and finally the reputed tyrants of our own time. This course will rely on a wide range of texts, both ancient and modern, and visual culture. We will read treatises from Aristotle to Machiavelli, examine tyrants in historical writers, such as Herodotus, Plutarch, and Suetonius, and explore the figure of the tyrant in early Greek poetry and in Sophocles’ tragedy Oedipus Tyrannus all while enriching our understanding of the tyrant through art, architecture, and film. Through this approach, we will attempt to understand the endurance of tyranny beginning with the rise of the Greek polis and republican government through the 21st century and the global proliferation of democracy.

The Global Energy Revolution: Fossil Fuels to Fracking to Renewables
John Madsen

In this colloquium, we will explore the on-going global energy revolution involving the transition from fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) to unconventional sources of oil and natural gas via fracking to clean,
renewable energy sources. Through a series of problem-based learning investigations, we will examine the geologic setting, exploration and recovery, and human use of fossil-fuels and the various types of renewable energy sources including hydropower, solar, wind, and biomass. In addition, we will discuss how the energy revolution impacts global politics. Activities to be completed during this seminar will include three group written reports, PowerPoint and poster presentations, two individual essays focused on current global energy issues, and an individual research report on a topic of interest derived from participation in the course. Readings will include the textbook “*Energy, Environment, and Climate*” by Richard Wolfson and selected materials from energy- and geological-related reports and texts.

HONR 292-081      TR 11:00AM – 12:15PM
Our Own Worst Enemy: Overpopulation and the Environment
Jack Bartley
“We have met the enemy and he is us.” Walt Kelly’s famous phrase from his 1971 Earth Day Pogo cartoon strip continues to ring true almost a half century after it was published. People are very good at making babies and keeping them alive until they mature; in turn, they make babies of their own. So, what traits do humans possess that make us so successful at reproduction, and how has this explosive population growth affected the environment? We will begin by examining several models of population growth to see how humans fit into various reproductive strategies. Is it possible that we can draw an analogy between our growth rate and that of a fermenting vat of beer? Using several chapters from Jared Diamond’s Guns, Germs and Steel we will see how the structure of our planet has affected population growth around the globe. In addition to sheer numbers, humans have developed technologies to exploit the Earth’s resources far beyond the capabilities of any other organism. We will use excerpts from Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene*, the National Geographic video *The Power of Water*, an interview with Garrett Hardin, and articles and essays from current publications to try to understand how population growth is the driving force behind the environmental problems we face today. Students will write short response pieces, two essays, and a research paper throughout the semester.

* In most cases, Honors Colloquia are approved to fulfill both University and College-level Breadth requirements as indicated, except in the College of Agriculture & Natural Resources and the College of Education & Human Development where they can only count as University Breadth, if applicable. Finance Majors should check with the College of Business & Economics Undergraduate Advising Office for approval of Colloquia into the finance majors’ College-level breadth requirements.