Fall 2019 Colloquia Descriptions

HONR 290-080  
Engaging the Dramatic Imagination  
Leslie Reidel  
Why the theatre? What accounts for a form lasting thousands of years? What does it mean to engage the dramatic imagination? What is the unique nature of the dramatic form and how is that form made manifest in the theatre? What distinguishes the theatre from television, film, and other mediated performance forms? Working in collaboration, we will explore these and other questions in depth as we read about theatre, see theatre, make theatre, and speculate about the possibility of the theatre in our media age.

HONR 290 - 081  
Vampires and Dandies: Victorian Popular Fiction and Print Culture  
Jesse Erickson  
In the past, the study of Victorian literature has focused on notable figures in the Western literary canon from Charles Dickens to George Eliot. More recently, however, new light has been shed on a more voluminous, transatlantic archive of popular fiction produced during this period. This course will look at Victorian literature from the popular and print culture perspectives. Focusing on a range of genre literature from sensation to sentimental, we will explore how popular fiction intersects with relevant issues of race, class, and gender. Additionally, by leveraging primary source materials and digital collections, we will examine the print culture of this literature and situate works in the context of a variety of specific commercial publishing formats including magazine novels, newspaper fiction, penny dreadfuls, sketches, and cheap novels. In this colloquium, students will likewise engage in a range of supplementary activities, as they are invited to participate in Victorian parlor games, floriography, grangerizing, and other pop culture phenomena of the Victorian era. Students will write brief response papers, analytical essays, and a research paper on a selected theme or text, which can be integrated in a final digital project.

HONR 290-082  
The Art of Medicine  
Ray Peters  
We will explore connections between the arts and medicine by looking at the patient-doctor relationship, the interpretation of illness, the duties and responsibilities of medical professionals, bioethics, death and dying, and other topics in medicine. Using stories, plays, films, essays, memoirs, poems, and the visual arts, we will examine the many challenges faced by medical professionals and patients as they deal with birth, death, health, illness, suffering, treatment, and recovery. We will study works by doctors and nurses who are also accomplished authors (such as Anton Chekhov, William Carlos Williams, Atul Gawande, Richard Selzer, Oliver Sacks, Cortney Davis, Jeanne Brynner, David Small, Esmé Weijun Wang, and Jay Baruch) as well as provocative works on medical themes, such as Wit, Equus, What's Left Out, The Collected Schizophrenias, and Stitches. Students will write brief response papers, analytical essays, and a research paper analyzing the connection between medicine and the arts by focusing on an author or artist of their choice.

HONR 290-083  
“The Play’s the Thing”: Material Cultures of English Renaissance Drama  
Matt Rinkevich  
In Othello, a bride dies because of a handkerchief. In Doctor Faustus, a scholar hopes burning books will save his soul. And, in The Roaring Girl, a pickpocket redefines her gender by smoking a pipe. Objects like handkerchiefs and pipes are powerful actors in English Renaissance drama, and this course takes them seriously. If, to quote Hamlet, “the play’s the thing,” we will unpack what happens when things are the play, when objects contribute to the dramatic force of plays by Shakespeare and others. First, we will work through important material-culture methodologies and theories. Then, we will read six English Renaissance plays. Our conversations will focus on how their objects construct and complicate social
and identic positions like race and gender—in other words, the ways they work to make us us. Additionally, we will encounter Renaissance plays as objects by analyzing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playbooks in Special Collections, discussing book history and design, and making our own playbooks in class. Student writing will include close-reading paragraphs, a research project, and submissions to a digital archive of English Renaissance material culture. We will create this learning resource collaboratively, and it will potentially contribute to ThingStor, an online database of objects in literature and art sponsored by our Center for Material Culture Studies.

HONR 290-084
Molière for Millennials
Deborah Steinberger
Sex addiction, political correctness, child marriage, Big Pharma, the underrepresentation of women in STEM: these are all topics that Molière (1622-1673), France's greatest comic dramatist, addresses in his plays. This course is devoted to some of his greatest works, including Tartuffe, The Misanthrope, The School for Wives, and Dom Juan. Students will stage selected scenes in class, and write three papers (two short, one longer) drawing parallels between the comedies and contemporary social problems. Seventeenth-century fairy tales and film versions of Molière’s plays will supplement our study of this groundbreaking author.

HONR 290-085
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 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 or expresses who we are. Your 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 proceeds. 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, the pressure to decide everything early, etc., any 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 addiction to some form or artist in popular culture. All of the papers will be in the genre or style of creative nonfiction or personal nonfiction.

HONR 290-087
The End of the World
Richard Hanley
Doomsday, or the end of the world, has been a recurring theme in western civilization since at least the beginning of the Common Era. The context is often religious—and often enough The End is welcomed—but in the last century secular discussions have focused upon nuclear annihilation, global warming, superintelligent AI, alien invasion, comet strikes, and epidemics (not to mention zombies). Through a fun (no, that's not a typo!) examination of scientific, religious, philosophical and science fiction texts we will examine the arguments that have been presented for The End, ponder what can be done about it, and ask what attitude we should take toward it.

HONR 290-088
Social/Science/Fiction
Jenny Lobasz
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.

HONR 291-080
Food, Glorious Food: Challenges for the 21st Century
Rolf Joerger
“Food production must double by 2050 to meet the demand of the world’s growing population and innovative strategies are needed to help combat hunger, which already affects more than 1 billion people in the world” experts told the United Nations General Assembly in 2009. Are we likely to achieve these goals? What are the challenges facing food producers and consumers now and in the future? Videos and reading materials will introduce students in the course to our food system. Food insecurity, sustainability, impact of climate change, genetic engineering, vegetarianism, animal rights, obesity and other food-related issues will be topics to be researched and discussed in this course. Students will write about challenges and possible solutions to problems with our current and future food system and create a video documentary on a food-related topic of their choice.

HONR 291-083
Antisemitism: Anatomy of a Hatred
Polly Zavadivker
This course considers one of the oldest and most persistent forms of hatred in the world. What is antisemitism? How is it defined? What are some of its varieties? How is it related to other forms of bigotry, prejudice and discrimination, and how is it unique? In this course we will consider how antisemitism has manifested itself in different eras, regions, political and economic systems and cultures. We will read essays and books by historians, analyze theological and literary works ranging from the Gospels to Franz Kafka, watch the infamous Nazi propaganda film Jud Suss, explore an online archival collection of antisemitic images and objects, and listen to three guest lectures about varieties of contemporary antisemitism. Course requirements will include brief response papers, two short papers, collaborative presentations, and a final research paper on one topic of your choice.

HONR 291-084
East/West: Moving beyond our cultural differences
John Jungck
We will compare and contrast basic paradigms of Eastern and Western culture through studying philosophy, poetry, food, art, architecture, sex/gender, ecology, flower arrangements, binary versus multimodal logic, plagiarism/forgery/facsimile, beauty, time, and literature. We will explore how cross-cultural narratives can help us move beyond binary distinctions. While we will begin with a comparison of Aristotle’s excluded middle to a Confucian conception of the inseparability of opposites (ying/yang) and both/and, the course aspires to develop respect for multiple perspectives and the power of evidence-based reasoning in the presence of uncertain, ambiguous, incomplete, and conflicting data. Students will write several one-page response papers, two essays, and a final research paper on the topic of the student’s choosing. Most of the readings are short articles, poems, and essays, but we all read three short book: Obasan by Joy Kogawa (about Japanese Canadians removed from their homes and possessions during World War II); The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business by Erin Meyer (2014); and Fuzzy Logic: The Revolutionary Computer Technology that Is Changing Our World by Daniel McNeill and Paul Freiberger.
HONR 291-085
Reading the Classics
Steven Sidebotham
We will read selections of some of the most noteworthy authors who lived and wrote in the classical Greek and Roman world. These documents will include prose and poetry on a wide range of topics and produced over about an 800 to 900 year period. In doing so, we will examine who the intended audiences might have been, how the views of these writers developed over the centuries and how we can measure the impact they had on their contemporaries, later readers and on us today. How many people living in the Greco-Roman world knew these important literary works and how did they learn about them? Did they actually read them or did they learn them through oral transmission only? These questions raise the issue of how literate was the population in those times and how does one define “literacy?” We will examine how recent scientific and archaeological investigations have confirmed some of the observations of these ancient writers and, in other instances, have led us to question who the authors really were and when they wrote. Did any use pen-names/pseudonyms and if they did, why would they do so and how can we determine this? A critical question to start with is the example of Homer and his reputed authorship of both the Iliad and the Odyssey. These modern scientific and investigative methods have as much to tell us about these authors and their works as does any traditional literary criticism. Students will write brief response papers, analytical essays, and a research paper.

HONR 291-086
I Am Not an Anti-Dentite!: Jewish Humor from the Shtetls to Seinfeld and Beyond
David Winkler
In October of 1978 Time Magazine estimated that, in spite of their comprising only 3% of the total population, a full 80% of professional comedians in the United States were Jewish. This domination of the American comedic landscape raises a series of questions that will inform our work this semester: why are Jews funny? What elements of Jewish history, culture, and tradition have fostered the particular characteristics of Jewish humor? Why has Jewish humor resonated so strongly with American audiences since its introduction to the New World over a hundred years ago? How have acculturation and shifting socio-political winds in the United States affected the evolution of Jewish humor in the United States? In this course we will interrogate some of the most influential books, films, and television programs of the Jewish-American comedic cannon in an attempt to respond to these questions. We will perform close readings of each text, identifying how rhetorical tools such as point of view, narrative structure, and dialogue (as well as lighting, camera angle, and music in the case of cinema and TV) are employed to communicate messages and ideas. The course is structured in a chronologically linear fashion, beginning with an exploration of the roots of Jewish humor in the Old World and following its evolution in America through the works of modern-day luminaries like Jerry Seinfeld, Larry David, Sarah Silverman, and Amy Schumer.

HONR 292-080
Our Ocean Planet
Carolyn Thoroughgood
The ocean covers nearly three quarters of our planet, provides 70 percent of the oxygen in the atmosphere and houses about 20 percent of the known species on Earth. The ocean regulates climate and weather and provides food and energy resources for humans worldwide. Water in every stream or river on the planet eventually ends up in the ocean, and all life on Earth is dependent upon its health. More than half of all Americans live within 50 miles of the coast, but whether near or far our lives are inextricably linked to the ocean. Society’s increasing demands on marine and coastal resources have placed ocean issues at the forefront of public concern. As a result, there are growing calls for improved governance to promote the wise use of ocean resources. This course will examine both the natural science and human dimensions of such issues as global climate change, ocean pollution and dead zones, dying corals, overfishing, sea level rise, and oceans and human health. Come learn more about “our ocean planet” through discussions of specific ocean processes and how they are intertwined with human survival and quality of life. Topical reports that present overviews of each of these topics will serve as the bases for discussion and students will be evaluated on their ability to think critically and analyze approaches designed to address complex, multiple use demands on ocean resources.
Authoritarian leaders and populism are in, globalism is out. England is exiting the European Union, while the US is fighting a trade war on multiple fronts. Meanwhile the Avengers: Endgame is setting records at the box office. At the same time, Congress can’t get along; the engineering program at UD is booming; marijuana is being legalized; and Facebook is under attack! Random, unrelated events? Hardly. These are just a few of the topics we’ll look at as we explore socionomics and how changes in social mood and our level of confidence shape the decisions we make every day individually and the events in politics, economics, science and culture that we see around us. Using current news stories and examples from real life, along with Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, the class will look at the choices we make and the situational logic that we routinely apply. Students should come prepared to explore history in a new light and to have their preconceptions of cause and effect seriously challenged. Four papers with an emphasis on clear and compelling writing will be required.