

UMBC Honors College

Seminars

FALL
2020

HONR 200: Talking Democracy [13504]

Instructors: David Hoffman and Romy Hubler, Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Tues. 4:30-7:00pm, TBA

The central questions that the course will explore include: What is the role of a citizen in a democracy? What is the "self" that participates in self-government and civic life? How does language shape our perceptions? How do different modes and styles of communication embed or undermine democratic values? How can people make intentional use of language and communication to foster democratic relationships and civic health? Considering these questions will involve drawing on insights from the fields of psychology, political science, American studies, history, English, and media and communication studies. In addition, this course will help students build skills that enable them to initiate and enact positive social change and will enable students to emerge with greater confidence and clarity about how to move forward as contributors to collective problem-solving and community-building.

HONR 210: Great Books Seminar I: The Impact of Short Fiction [4833]

Instructor: Norman Prentiss, Honors College, Wed. 4:30-7:00pm, LIB 216M

The modern attention span often seems to prefer brief stories -- but is that such a bad thing? Edgar Allan Poe has argued for the benefits of the short story form: "During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences..." This course considers how short stories can have a special impact: they focus on a single idea, for example, or immerse readers in the key moment of a character's life. We will study various stories in depth, appreciating the form's brevity and intensity, and will compare the effect of other short narratives: poems, paintings, one-act plays, short films. Students will also explore the impact of short fiction on their own lives, considering the stories we tell among friends, or the narratives that shape our areas of study.

HONR 300-01: Understanding HIV & AIDS [3197]

Instructor: Jodi Kelber-Kaye, Honors College, Wed. 1:00-3:30pm, LIB 216M

This course will focus on how HIV and AIDS are understood in the United States, 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, how those knowledges, or understandings, depend on each other for meaning. We will also be looking at how these knowledges are inter-disciplinary 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 shorter and longer writing assignments, and a group project that includes an intervention in cultural expressions of HIV and AIDS.

HONR 300-02: Reading the Body in East Asian Culture [4829]

Instructor: Julie Oakes, Honors College, Mon./Wed. 10:00-11:15am, LIB 216M

In East Asian history and culture, the body has been embedded in a more holistic approach than the Western perspective, in that humans are seen as sociological beings whose physical states carry meaning to the wider community (rather than bodies being understood objectively and physiologically). Over the semester, we will look at specific examples from China, Japan and Korea that illustrate this concept. For example, how was hair a signifier of female power in Japan--or filiality in Korea? What did Chinese bound feet have to do with Confucian harmony? Or more recently, why are organ transplants deemed ideologically more problematic in Japan?

HONR 300-03: Constitutional Conflicts in the Age of Trump [5339]

Instructor: William Blake, Political Science, Tues. 1:00-3:30pm, LIB 216M

A smorgasbord of constitutional law and politics. The election of Donald Trump has ushered in a host of debates about less familiar features of the United States Constitution. In an era of highly polarized politics, the Trump presidency has generated unusual concerns about the stability and robustness of the American constitutional system. This course will try to make sense of those concerns and will also give particular attention to questions of presidential power and the actions of the Trump administration and its opponents.



HONR 300-04: The Art of Paper Folding Design [5455]

Instructor: Ben Johnson, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering, Tues./Thurs. 10:00-11:15am, LIB 216M

Combining math (geometry), engineering, design and art, this course will introduce students to the art and design of origami, or paper folding. Students will build their technical and mechanical skills of paper folding and also learn design techniques so they can modify existing designs or create their own. Students will also examine the practical aspects of paper folding design, for example, transporting large telescope lenses into space, or designing more effective surgical stents in medicine.



HONR 300-05: Nature vs Nurture--Why Not Both? [13490]

Instructor: Instructor: Cynthia Wagner, Biological Sciences, Mon. 4:30-7:00pm, LIB 216M

How much of our personality and health is due the genes we inherit from our parents and how much of who we are can be attributed to our environment? The "nature" of this debate is focused on the sequences of DNA we acquire from our parents and the "nurture" is our environment in which we find ourselves. In this class, designed for students with high school biology (or more), we will begin by gaining a basic understanding of which proteins get made in a given cell which then result in our physical characteristics and move on to reading and discussing scientific articles that focus on how the environment can and does change which proteins get made in a given cell. In addition, we'll consider how scholars in other fields, such as sociologists, psychologists, and physicians are using this information to approach their research and how these insights can lead to new ways of treating diseases.

HONR 300-06: Bias and Justice in Technology Design [13491]

Instructor: Nora McDonald, Information Systems, Tues. 4:30-7:00pm, LIB 216M

This course introduces concepts of privacy and vulnerability in research and explores frameworks that can be applied to design and engineering issues. Students will be asked to apply what they read to real-world privacy issues, and to frame user problems through a social justice lens. Students will walk away with answers to questions like: How can we apply theories to better understand the discriminatory outcomes of technology privacy design? How can we design research that supports privacy requirements gathering and other design activities that support social justice? Readings for this course span law and policy, human-centered computing, and critical theory. Students should walk away with a sense of how to identify social issues of our day relating to privacy and vulnerabilities that stem from the convergence of race, class, economics, policy, and more.

HONR 300-07: History of Medicine [13492]

Instructor: Randy Kidd, Ph.D. History of Science and Medicine, Thurs. 4:30-7:00pm, LIB 216M

This interdisciplinary seminar draws upon history, science and philosophy to evaluate both our evolving understanding of the human body and key discoveries which have shaped how we view ourselves. The ancients considered the human body a microcosm or 'mini cosmos;' thinkers during the Industrial Revolution considered our bodies complex machines; more recent thinkers have compared the human body to sophisticated computers. Students will analyze key texts that reveal crucial discoveries, such as the circulation of the blood, the internal environment, the existence of electricity within the human body, blood types, DNA, germs and infections, and several others.

