Seminars for Fall 2020

*Please know that the following criteria will be considered for registration for all Honors Seminars:

1. Seniors will be given priority to register for Honors seminars.
2. We will consider the student’s progress towards the completion of their Honors Baccalaureate (i.e. number of Honors credits taken, second language fulfillment status, and a cumulative GPA of 3.5 and above).
3. The seminar is advantageous towards the student’s field/s of study and/or future career plans.

SPECIAL NOTE: It is highly recommended that you put your name on multiple seminar lists that work in your schedule or peek your interest to ensure that you are placed in at least one of them.

Death Becomes Us: The Mystery of Mortality and the Need for Meaning

HONR 494-001 (4 credits)
Prerequisites: HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time: M/W 10:00 – 11:50 am
Place: NAH 329
Instructor: Dr. Thomas P. Donovan, Honors College

Course Description:
This seminar seeks to critically explore the role of mortality awareness in the creation of cultural meaning systems. We will explore how our beliefs and values provide a crucial antidote in the face of mortality and against feelings of insignificance and meaninglessness, while also contributing to creating "made-up minds" in the face of uncertainty. We will also explore how challenges to our systems of belief often inspire defensive and aggressive responses to this perceived mortal threat and the implications for our present global reality. This course will examine how humans across cultures manage the enormity of our awareness of finitude and the efforts to give meaning to our temporary existence.

Thomas Patrick Donovan has been teaching graduate and undergraduate students since 2004, and has served as a Faculty Fellow in the Honors College at Montana State University since 2011. He holds a doctorate in Psychology and is particularly interested in the existential questions regarding living a meaningful life that inform the human condition the world over.
Design Thinking for Our Community

HONR 494-002 (4 credits)
Prerequisites: HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time: M/W 10:00 am - 11:50 am
Place: NAH 325
Instructors: Professors Brad Stanton, Department of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering and Lucas Graf, Honors College/Music Department

Course Description:

In this upper division seminar course, we explore the process of design thinking in our multidisciplinary class through solving real world problems in our community. In Fall 2020, we will be applying the design thinking process to complex problems facing our MSU community and beyond. Examples of past projects are widely varied ranging from re-designing Move-In day on campus (see http://www.montana.edu/news/16319/honors-college-students-design-plan-to-improve-move-in-day) to assisting community non-profits like GVLT, CHP and the Community Cafe to solve tough problems facing their organizations. While the course is open to all honors students, we are especially seeking those students in humanities, basic science, arts and architecture and business majors. The seminar is capped at 20 and no more than 50% of its students will be from any given college.

Brad taught high school English for five years before going back to school for engineering where he studied the bidirectional reflectance distribution of various snow surface morphologies as part of a NASA funded research project. He now teaches for MSU in both the Engineering and Honors Colleges. In the summers, he instructs on climbing expeditions for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) based out of Lander, WY. Here at home, Bozeman provides the perfect balance of skiing, trail running, fishing and the more cerebral side of research and teaching. During mud season, I tinker with model trains or dither in the abstractions of things mathematical that pair well with coffee. He is interested in inspiring students to explore interdisciplinary design through collaborative efforts between educators across all colleges.

Dr. Lukas Graf is a faculty fellow in the Honors College where he has taught Text and Critics since 2015. He is also currently directing the University Chorus and teaching undergraduate voice students through the school of music. Dr. Graf also directs the Intermountain Opera chorus and the St. James Episcopal Choir in downtown Bozeman. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Graf taught Voice, Choir, and Opera at Minot State University in North Dakota. Dr. Graf received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Montana State University and holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Voice Performance and Pedagogy, and two Masters of Music degrees in Voice Performance and Choral Conducting from the University of Colorado-Boulder. Dr. Graf has performed and conducted opera, musical theater, in concert, and in ensembles throughout Europe and the United States. As a prior military youth and veteran, he prides himself in the work he does entertaining troops at home and abroad.
Our Nuclear Age

HONR 494-003 (4 credits)
Prerequisites: HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time: T/R 8:00 – 9:50 am
Place: NAH 321
Instructor: Dr. Amanda Rutherford, Department of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering

Course Description:

This upper division seminar is a multidisciplinary dive into nuclear energy. We examine the fundamental physics, historical, cultural, political and energy implications of nuclear energy and its applications. The ultimate goal of the class is not to shape opinions on nuclear energy, but rather to provide the background knowledge, technical foundation and political backstory on this controversial technology.

Prior to beginning her 13+ year teaching career at MSU, Mandy was a R&D engineer at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Working there sparked an interest in all things nuclear that she hasn’t been able to shake since. Currently Mandy is the lead instructor for EGEN 310, Multidisciplinary Engineering Design. She also co-teaches the honors version of this course, Design Thinking for Our Community, and has taught a slew of other classes in the NACOE.

***************************************************************

Living Poetics-Narratives in the Anthropocene

HONR 494-004 (4 credits)
Prerequisites: HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time: T/R 1:00 – 3:00 pm OR M/W 5:10 – 7:00 pm (based on student preference one of these times will be offered, please indicate your preference when signing up in the Honors Office)
Place: TBA
Instructor: Professor Nina Schweppe, Honors College and Modern Languages

Course Description:

Through this seminar, students will analyze how humans use narratives to construct experience and identity, as well as a framework for adhesion to or establishing a community. This applies as much to individuals establishing themselves personally in a new setting, as to researchers in a lab establishing themselves in the STEM community or to a doctor’s bedside manner. Narratives are not separate from experience; they define how we live and die, and what we do with the space in between.

In addition, the students will explore narrative innovations across disciplines. It is based on the premise that stories are the primary way human beings have of organizing experience and
making sense of the world; that narrative provides the infrastructure to make sense of the unknown in any culture. Stories take many forms to give meaning to experience, transmit ideas and inform understanding across all disciplines.

Nina speaks German, French and English, grew up in various places on three continents, and has been in pursuit to understand what drives humanity ever since she can remember. She holds an MA in German Literature and Philosophy from McGill University in Montreal with a longstanding research interest in the cultivation of ideas and what happens when data intersects with people. Nina brings an interdisciplinary and intercultural focus to all of the courses she designs and teaches.

******************************************************************************

Shakespeare in Performance

HONR 494IA-001 (4 credits)
Prerequisites:  HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time:  M/W  3:10 – 5:00 pm
Place:  NAH 329
Instructor:  Professor Kent Davis

Course Description:

"Discovering Shakespeare". This seminar will focus on the great works of William Shakespeare. Not only will these pieces be dissected from an academic and literary standpoint, but they will be analyzed in the way the Bard intended them to be, through performance. Led by Kent Davis, a classically trained actor and director with over twenty years of experience at venues ranging from La Jolla Playhouse to the Mark Taper Forum to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, this seminar will analyze the works of Shakespeare from all facets including dramaturgical analysis, analysis from the actor’s perspective, including verse work and choices of interpretation, and directorial interpretation of the plays. Shakespeare's intent was never to have his plays read, but to rather be shared through performance. This course will therefore culminate in an end of the semester performance.

Kent Davis has taught in the Honors College since 2009, and has spent most of his life making stories as a writer, actor, and game designer. His novel for kids, A RIDDLE IN RUBY is slated for release by HarperCollins’ Greenwillow Books in September, 2015. He holds a B.A. in English from the University of Pennsylvania and an MFA in Theater from UC, San Diego.
The Art and Science of Medicine

HONR 494RH-01 or 494RS-01 (4 credits)
Prerequisites: HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time:  T/R  3:10 – 5:00 pm
Place:  NAH 321
Instructor:  Professor Don Demetriades, Department of History and Philosophy and University Honors

Course Description:

Designed for students from all academic disciplines, this seminar will focus on just how broadly and profoundly contemporary medicine touches all of our lives. It will examine the underlying principles of medicine through the lens of literature, science, art and related fields. The why of suffering and disease, the how of healing, and the role both patient and physician play in individual health will be explored. Medical professionals will be invited to visit the seminar.

Professor Demetriades is the past coordinator of the humanities curriculum for the Inteflex Program (Integrated Pre-med/Med Program) at the University of Michigan. He currently serves as an Assistant Teaching Professor for the MSU Honors College (nine years) and the History and Philosophy Dept. (fifteen years). He holds a BA in Philosophy and Classics (Michigan), an MA in Philosophy (Michigan), and was a Doctoral Candidate in Philosophy (Michigan). He is also a veteran of thirty-six marathons and twenty ultra-marathons.

********************************************************************************

Wolves in Yellowstone:  A Social, Scientific and Photographic Journey

HONR 494IN-001 (4 credits)
Prerequisites:  HONR 201 & HONR 202, or HONR 301
Time:  T/R  10:00 – 11:50 am
Place:  NAH 329
Instructor:  Dr. John Winnie, Department of Ecology

Course Description:

In this seminar, we will explore society's historic and current attitudes towards wolves framed in the context of wolf reintroduction in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Further, we will evaluate wolves' role as ecosystem engineers by examining how they influence prey population dynamics and behavior, and in turn look at how changes in prey may be influencing plant communities. Students are expected to read, understand, synthesize and discuss content and concepts from the social and life sciences, and use this knowledge to inform opinions and positions they express verbally and in writing. In addition, over the course of the semester, students will develop natural history photography skills through a combination of in-class instruction, independent assignments, and 2-3 field trips to Yellowstone National Park and
surrounding lands. Students will use their photos to illustrate the ecological effects of wolf reintroduction, and related conservation issues and controversies, in seminar presentations and their final papers.

John Winnie Jr., PhD, is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Ecology Department here at MSU. He started doing wolf and elk research in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in 2000, publishing regularly on topics ranging from animal behavior to the influences predators have on prey population dynamics, to trophic cascades. Dr. Winnie is also an avid natural history photographer whose work has been widely published.