

# Honors Seminar Descriptions

Fall 2020

## HONR 292A

### **Section 1: Science as a Way of Knowing: Climate Change Ecology and Challenges from Plant to People – J. Reeves**

*Section 1: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

Climate change has already begun to have profound effects on the structure and function of many ecosystems around the world. These effects and corresponding future predictions are very strongly founded in objective science despite the highly political nature of climate change in our country. With the realities of climate change rapidly becoming more directly tangible to people both in the United States and globally, objectively understanding how climate change will continue to affect ecosystems, agriculture, natural resources, and ultimately human well-being is becoming increasingly critical. Using “Science as a Way of Knowing,” we will explore the scientific method as the most objective process we have as humans to understand the natural world and how the process of science has led us to know what we know about our global climate systems, both present and distantly past. We will introduce what science has taught us about how and why climate change happens (both naturally and anthropogenically) and we will continue with case studies on the effects that climate changes such as increased CO<sub>2</sub> and temperature have had (and will have) on the functioning of Earth’s ecosystems at many levels from soils/land, to plants, to insects, to vertebrate wildlife, and ultimately humans. These case studies will be viewed through the lenses of various sciences including physics/chemistry, ecology, conservation, agriculture, and others. Woven throughout will be much discussion on human values and the sociological and political constraints that we face as we tackle the challenges surrounding human use of natural resources and the corresponding anthropogenic causes of climate change.

### **Section 2: Science as a Way of Knowing: Water Science- C. Olivo-Delgado**

*Section 2: MWF 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM*

Water is a fascinating substance that intrigues scientists from all historical ages and disciplines. It is essential for sustaining life on earth and represents ¾ of the human body. What are the intrinsic qualities that it has, and particular transformations it undergoes that make water a unique compound controlling many processes in engineering, chemistry, biology, ecology, nutrition, and even human behavior? This seminar will engage students in the exploration of science from an interdisciplinary standpoint. The discussions will focus on relevant topics that will make students question scientific knowledge, theoretical frameworks and ethical considerations while applying concepts to the study of water.

## HONR 292B

### **Section 1: Knowing in Arts and Humanities - K. Foskin**

*Section 1: TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM*

The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing - and their purposes, values, and limitations - in the arts and humanities. The seminar considers what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge;

and the ethical and aesthetic implications of what one gains and does with the acquisition of knowledge. Students will integrate literature, film, theater, art, and philosophy in discussions and assignments. Equally, we shall investigate the dynamic and complex ways in which we know via the principal vehicle of our being human and how 'contests' with both within the human and non-human realms utilize many aspects or elements of knowing (e.g., narrative, myth, science, morality and technology). This course takes as its premise the following starting point: that knowing (and knowledge) is a diverse human construct involving three planes of human activity, 1) the emotional/psychological, 2) the somatic, and 3) conceptual/analytical. Our 'playing fields of enquiry' will be a series of seminal sci-fi novels (and their equivalent films) that challenges and 'contests' how we know ourselves to be human.

### **Section 2: Knowing in Arts and Humanities - C. Becker**

*Section 2: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing - and their purposes, values, and limitations - in the arts and humanities. The seminar considers what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and the ethical and aesthetic implications of what one gains and does with the acquisition of knowledge. Students will integrate literature, art, music, and philosophy in discussions and assignments. The thematic focus of the seminar is on "knowing nature". The seminar explores and critically reflects on different ways of knowing about nature in the context of arts and humanities, including reflections on scientific ways of knowing nature. The seminar discusses the relevance of a broader understanding of nature for analyzing and addressing current environmental issues and sustainability challenges, how different types of knowing can be integrated in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations, and why arts and humanities are crucial for understanding and achieving sustainability. Students will practice the critical analysis and integration of different ways of knowing to address sustainability issues with case studies.

### **Section 3: Knowing in Arts and Humanities:— P. Erickson**

*Section 3: MWF 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM*

TBD

### **Section 4 and 7: Knowing in Arts and Humanities - J. Kitchens**

*Section 4: MW 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM*

*Section 7: MW 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

The theme for this course is the "social construction of knowledge," and it engages with the ideas of how knowledge gets produced, by whom and for what purposes. Other considerations include what counts as knowledge and how has it been produced and transmitted in the past (and present), e.g., public schooling? What other institutions are involved in the production of knowledge? And what is the relationship between knowledge and power? Course materials will range in disciplinary perspectives including philosophy, history, education, sociology, literature, and film. Students will also be guided in a self-reflective investigation into how knowledge has been produced in their personal lives, and specifically how such knowledge informs their worldview, i.e., how they interpret and act in the world.

### **Section 5 and 8: Knowing in Arts and Humanities: Knowing through Literature - J. Kitchens**

*Section 5: TR 3:00 PM – 4:45 PM*

*Section 8: TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM*

What can literature tell us about the world around us? Or about how we are to live in it? The literary arts have been part of the transmission of knowledge and culture from their inception. This class will examine literature that was purposefully meant to transmit culture, convey information, or otherwise provide knowledge or wisdom. Much of what we call “myth” was for others, much more literal as it often sought to explain natural events in the world as well as provide instruction on how to live a virtuous and meaningful life. This class will read various texts from around the world, including those from ancient mythology as well as the wisdom literature and mysticism of the near and far east, e.g., excerpts from Proverbs, the works of Rumi, *The Tao Te Ching*, and *The Jātaka Tales* (Buddhist instructional stories). We will also read fables including tales from *One Thousand and One Nights*, The Brothers Grimm, and some Norwegian folktales. Students will also investigate the Morality Plays from the Medieval era (and will have the opportunity to write their own). Finally, the class will look at American “Sage” writers such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir in addition to realism and Modernist authors who often thought that literature could provide greater “truths” than science, or other objective disciplines.

**Section 6: Knowing In Arts and Humanities: Do Non-Human Animals Make Art? - S. Zwick-Tapley**

*Section 6: MW 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM*

Do non-human animals engage in the arts and humanities? How do we know? How do we know what constitutes the arts and humanities among our own species? This class will look at the definitions, history and current research regarding language, creativity and expression. From the philosophies of Charles Darwin and Renee Descartes to the research by Jane Goodall, Marc Hauser and Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, we will explore the human identity and the identity we attribute to other species. Be prepared for thinking both inside and outside of the box of what we know and what we imagine.

**Section 7: See section 4**

**Section 8: See section 5**

HONR 292C

**Section 1: Knowing Across Cultures: Wildlife Conservation Issues - N. Vieira**

*Section 1: MWF 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM*

The seminar will engage students in the exploration of ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and values, and analyzing how these perspectives and values influence what we know about self, others, and world issues. Specifically, we will look at how culture influences global conservation of fish and wildlife. Students will critically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds interact with science to influence both conservation successes and intercultural conflicts over wildlife management. Students will also learn to recognize effects of different “ways of knowing” and cultural biases on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how they shape understanding of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge in conservation, and in life in general. We will explore these themes through readings, group discussion, movies and videos, guest speakers, walking field trips and outside time!

## **Section 2: Knowing Across Cultures: Exploring the Foundations of Moral Reasoning Across Cultures - K. Jagers**

*Section 2: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and analyzing how cultural values differently inform research methodologies. The seminar considers how cultural values inform what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and moral implications of how knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and reproduced. Specifically, this course will provide experiences for students to critically and analytically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds influence what we know about self, others, and the world. These reflections will involve examples of how social and historical gaps, omissions, and shifts in knowledge, including what is not known, what cannot be known, and what is un-known (which may have been disregarded, discarded, or forgotten) often reflect competing cultural perspectives and values. Students will also learn to understand the effects of cultural bias on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how this shapes understandings of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge. In this way, students will explore how cultural values inform and influence which research methodologies are used for knowledge production, construction, and acquisition. By analyzing contemporary case studies or issues on a theme, students will further integrate and evaluate different ways of knowing.

## **Section 3: Knowing Across Cultures: Caribbean Crossroads: A Survey of the History, Culture and Identities of the Caribbean Islands - C. Olivo-Delgado**

*Section 3: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

This is a survey course that will explore the historically diverse and culturally rich identities of the Caribbean islands and its peoples. Students will voyage through social and cultural representations of identity in music, language, food, religion, history, politics and economics. Critical analyses of the contemporary issues concerning the Caribbean communities will be encouraged, along with a broad perspective of the different stages in the development of these island countries and their contribution to the overall history of the Western hemisphere. The course will provide a venue for students to address different aspects of the Caribbean culture in very dynamic approaches

## **Section 5: Knowing Across Cultures: - C. Lopez-Ramirez**

*Section 5: TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM*

There are around 60 million people in the world who have been displaced by war, persecution, natural disaster or conflict. Migration has become a big issue, especially after multiple terrorist attacks in Europe and the US over the last few years. As a consequence of the current immigration narrative, right-wing movements and parties, xenophobia, a fear for diversity and a lack of tolerance are on the rise around the world. This course will inquire into the nature, causes and consequences of contemporary refugee waves in our globalized world. We will set aside the current narrative and have a more open dialogue. To that end, we will debate personal social identity construction and stereotypes, and analyze the positive side of immigration to create a more open, respectful and tolerant society. Particular attention will be paid to the recent EU crisis, integration and segregation processes, racism, and cultural diversity.