

# Honors Seminar Descriptions

Fall 2020

HONR 492

## **Section 1: World War I and How It Shaped the Conflicts of the Last 100 Years - L. Cooper**

*Section 1: MWF 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM*

November 11, 2018 marked the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I (1914-1918). Few events in history have so dramatically changed the world, taken so many lives, and had such far-reaching consequences. Six-thousand men lost their lives every day over the four years of fighting. The war also created the conditions that led to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the emergence of Soviet Communism. The peace treaties redrew the map of Europe and the Middle East, but instead of being “the war to end all wars” World War I sowed the seeds of future conflict, the most consequential being Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 and another tragic world war from 1939-1945. One historian has summed up World War I by concluding that “it was nothing less than the greatest error of modern history.” The seminar does not assume any previous knowledge of late 19th or 20th century European history. Objectives will be to (1) examine the war and its causes from an interdisciplinary perspective—political, military, diplomatic, economic, psychological, technological, and cultural; (2) understand how the war laid the groundwork for subsequent and recent conflicts; and (3) include topics of interest to STEM and other students—how advances in chemistry, airplane and naval technology, biomedicine and surgery, tanks, and machine guns impacted combat.

## **Section 2: Globalize This: Fear and Loathing in the Age of Progress and Prosperity - K. Jagers**

*Section 2: TR 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM*

In this course we will explore both the perils and promises of globalization. For better or worse, the process of globalization is fundamentally transforming the economic, cultural and political foundations of the globe. While globalization holds out the promise of progress – providing significant opportunities for the emancipation of much of the world’s population from the tyranny of poverty, ignorance and political repression – it simultaneously evokes a sense of fear and loathing throughout much of the globe. Globalization is a contentious process -- its meaning almost entirely dependent on who is talking about it. Pro-market economic reformers, displaced workers, environmental and human rights activists, security experts and cultural nationalists, to name a few, all compete for the right to stake claim to the idea of globalization and shape public perceptions about its potential impact on the world in which we live. In a very real sense globalization has become the buzzword that serves to crystallize disagreements concerning the speed and direction of social and political change in the world at-large. While both the meaning and merits of globalization have become highly politicized in recent years, with intellectual debate about this topic sometimes transforming itself into contentious political action and legislation, in this class we will seek to evaluate the origins, nature and impact of this phenomenon by using insights and analytical tools from the humanities (e.g., history and philosophy) and the social sciences (e.g., economics, political science, psychology and sociology).

## **Section 3: Freedom in Focus: Understanding the Quest for Human Liberation Through Philosophy and Film - K. Jagers**

*Section 3: T 2:00 PM – 4:50 AM*

The modern age has rightly been referred to as the “age of freedom.” Compared to life in ancient and medieval societies – where superstition, communal obligations and entrenched hierarchies of social power effectively undermined the autonomy of individual action and thought – the modern age represents a “rational” rejection of these traditional forms of social stratification, authority and control. Forged by the ideals of the European Enlightenment, the modern world was envisioned to be a world in which the individual would be liberated from the dead hand of ignorance, tradition and hierarchy. While the desire of humankind to shed the yoke of unjust authority relations and systems of social control is, as noted by President Bush, “on the march,” nevertheless, the appropriate role of freedom in society continues to be a matter of considerable debate and conflict. While “spreading freedom’s blessings” may be “the calling of our time,” what, precisely, does this mean? What does it mean to have free will; to live in a free society; to express oneself freely? Moreover, is the march of freedom inevitable? Is it desirable? Should it be unbridled in its promotion and construction? Is freedom the “natural” condition of mankind – “the birthright and deep desire of every human soul” -- or do humans actually covet other values – personal happiness, social order, fealty to God, commitment to community, the pursuit of social justice, etc. – which may actually conflict with the unchecked promotion of individual freedom? While there is a temptation in our society to uncritically accept the idea of freedom as an unalloyed “good,” in this course we will seek to deconstruct the idea of freedom and systematically explore its social and ethical boundaries. In this course we will view the concept of freedom through the analytical lens of philosophy and the artistic lens of modern cinema. Why cinema? The arts – painting, literature, theatre, music, dance and film – play an important role in human society not simply because they entertain us but also because they force us to reflect upon and challenge our commonly held beliefs concerning social reality (metaphysics), human knowledge (epistemology), and moral values (axiology). In other words, the arts help us better understand, as well as shape, our collective human experiences. Contemporary cinema, while often infantile and banal, nevertheless, possesses the capacity to both challenge and mold our values, desires and even identities with its powerful narratives and images. In this class we will use film as a pedagogical tool for better understanding the role of freedom in our lives. Every week we will analyze a film using different conceptions of freedom found in philosophy, psychology, theology and economics. As such, the films provide the context under which we can explore the philosophical concepts under investigation. In addition to exploring how modern cinema addresses the idea of freedom, we will also explore the significance of this artistic medium as a mechanism for both social liberation and social control. Throughout the course of the semester we will examine this topic by approaching the concept of freedom through a myriad of distinct -- and often incompatible -- philosophical perspectives: (1) psychological freedom; (2) spiritual freedom; (3) biological freedom; (4) metaphysical freedom; (5) social freedom; (6) political freedom; and (7) economic freedom. As we shall discover, only by exploring the many dimensions of freedom, and then investigating how each dimension is influenced by the degree of freedom found in the others, will we be able to achieve a deeper understanding of the promises and pitfalls associate with the pursuit of human liberation in the contemporary world.

**Section 5: Chicago's Music: The Crossroads of History, Race and Culture - J. Pippen**

*Section 5: TR 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM*

What can music tell us about a city? How have musical practices been used to create community? This course considers these questions by examining the city of Chicago. A center for trade and the major

metropolis of the American Midwest, Chicago provides many insights into how people create community through music. Blues, jazz, classical music, soul, punk, and hip-hop have all found homes in Chicago. Despite the widespread popularity of these practices, racial and class-based divisions persist in Chicago. Indeed, some have used musical practices to create exclusive groups and to reinforce division. In exploring the history of Chicago's music, students will gain foundational listening skills and music vocabulary and will practice listening through a variety of theoretical, analytical, historical, and cultural lenses.

### **Section 6: The Greatest Conversation Piece Ever Invented In America: Baseball - P. Vaughan Knaus**

*Section 6: MW 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM*

Ah, Baseball...Number 42; Chicago Black Sox; the Boys of October; America's "Second National Anthem"; the Babe; doping; lock-outs; the stand-up triple, three-up-and-three-down, walk-off homer; Cracker Jacks and cold ones; Field of Dreams, A League of Their Own, Pride of the Yankees. America's Baseball's history provides a point of entry into American culture, American values, and, American dreams. For students, there is no better way to understand the creation and destruction of the color and gender lines in twentieth-century America than to draw examples from the history of race and gender in sports, a history which is now richly documented in biographies, historical works, speeches, and textual film. Scholars acknowledge that an examination of sports can be instrumental in raising important themes in American history. Baseball's history provides a point of entry into American culture.

### **Section 7: A History of Sex in Art – S. Zwick-Tapley**

*Section 7: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM*

**\*\*Warning: The content in this class may be offensive to some students.\*\***

Nudity. Eroticism. Power. Victimization. Gender. Destruction and promotion of religious norms. Since the beginning of artistic expression the fine and performing arts have explored sex. What intrigues us most? What captivates us? In this class we will discuss ancient Greek theatre, Renaissance portrayals of Jesus, 2nd century Indian erotic temple art, English Restoration Theatre, Japanese Shunga, Argentinian tango, rap and contemporary American photography and film. In addition, the theme of censorship will be explored.

### **Section 8: The Process and Publication of Science - M. Simmons**

*Section 8: TR 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM*

The two themes for our course are the scientific process together with scientific writing and publication. For the scientific-process portion of our course we will cover how science is effectively and efficiently done, how one trains to become a scientist, challenges that scientists face in their working environment, and how one contributes to humanity's understanding of nature. We will discuss readings from important contributors to our understanding of the scientific process, including Richard Feynman, Richard Hamming, John Platt, and Karl Popper. But we will interleave these readings with brain-teasers, scientific humor, reality checks, as well as Ted Talks and YouTube videos. The scientific-writing-and-publication portion of our course is based on the adage that, "Until you publish you're just playing in the lab." We will discuss each of the steps necessary to publish your novel insights and results in the scientific literature, from writing each section of your manuscript to working with editors and reviewers. We will practice writing and critiquing structured abstracts. The seminar is not just for science and engineering majors. It is also for non-science majors interested in technical writing and publication.

## **Section 9: Italian Cinema – C. Burghardt**

*Section 9: TR 6:00 PM – 7:15 PM*

This course will analyze fifteen classic Italian films from the 1940s to the 1990s. We will appreciate a half century of Italian cinematic masterpieces, considered as individual works of art. At the same time, we will explore how these movies both reflected and affected the wider social and cultural environment of post-war Italy. In doing so, we will investigate the evolution of national aesthetics, politics, and genres. Viewing these movies provides a window into the recent history of a beautiful, diverse, and culturally significant nation. Finally, we will assess the similarities and differences of some of the great directors of world cinema, including Rossellini, De Sica, Fellini, Pasolini, Visconti, Olmi, Antonioni, and Bertolucci. All films will be in Italian, with English subtitles. Please note: We will view one complete movie per week on Tuesday evenings, so class will usually last until 9:15 p.m. For shorter films, we will adjourn earlier.