Honors Seminar Descriptions
Spring 2022

HONR 392

Section 1: Coming to America – M. Elkins
MWF 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM
The story of America is the story of immigrants – their problems and contributions, their struggles to assimilate or to resist assimilation in their new country. In this course, we will begin with an overview of this issue, particularly focusing on the 19th and early 20th Century immigration from Europe to the northeastern section of the United States. Other immigrants have their stories as well. We will move on to look at West Coast immigrants. We will conclude with an in-depth look at the immigration reform debate that is swirling around us today.

Section 2: A Mirror of My Own: Female and Nonbinary Self-Portraits in Comics and Poetry – N. Hickey
MWF 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM
In this course, we will examine self-portraits of women and nonbinary people in a wide variety of comics and poetry. From the early poems of Sappho to the newest work of Marjane Satrapi, this course will focus on each work as an act of definition. We will critically examine the comics and poems assigned in scope of broader issues facing females and nonbinary people during the time of production. How does the intersection of gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation influence the way these women and nonbinary chose to depict themselves? How is their work responding to the same forces? Placing the pieces in historical and socio-political context will give way to a nuanced examination and understanding of the power of creation as a tool against inequality. The course is designed to facilitate exploration, examination, evaluation, and communication. Reading and reflection is crucial to student success, as we will engage in seminar style discussions. Producing high quality, college-level writing is expected, and we will be flexing our creative muscles as well. We will examine the relationship between creating and identity in numerous examples, and come away with a better understanding our own.
Section 3: From the Cradle to the Grave: Abraham Lincoln, what’s up with that Hat? – P. Vaughan Knaus

This semester, as we examine Abraham Lincoln’s life and times, we consider the man, both myths and truths. The focus of this seminar, America’s 16th president, provides a portal through which to consider United States society and history. This course provides an introduction to comparative social history, written by an historian and lifelong Lincoln admirer. It uses broad cultural and geographic diffusion of American values and traditions over time to examine diverse and changing social, economic, and political meanings of the world’s then-newest democracy. Examining different cultural settings and emphasizing the ways in which a single individual may alter history provides both challenge and quandary. Although America’s antebellum years, then Civil War and Reconstruction eras demand attention as the most striking examples of Lincoln’s pervasive impact, the course will consider Lincoln as a global phenomenon, exploring his impact in some European and African societies, for example. As an introduction, the course will confine itself to English language texts, but it will use a wide range of primary sources, including newspapers and journals, memoirs, correspondence, promotional materials, and photographs to introduce students to basic concepts of historical method and problems of evidence. Students will be encouraged to consider Abraham Lincoln’s impact in particular historical contexts as a ‘cultural process,’ from the manner of his nature through his adaption into the White House to the emergence of his distinctive proprietary and patriotic attitudes. Among the many topics absorbed, this course will return periodically to questions of American divisions and US inclusive aspirations, race and class relations, and the emergence and sustainability of a free labor market economy. Students' assignments will require a combination of reading, writing, and research skills, and the course will utilize through readings and discussion—the variety of academic materials available for the study of this vital subject.

Section 4: Why Do They Hate Us: Understanding the Myths, Realities and Limitations of the "American Empire" – K. Jaggers

In this seminar we will explore the tension between how U.S. citizens perceive themselves and how, and why, the rest of the world perceives us in a different, and often less flattering, light. At its core, this seminar will focus on the uneasy relationship between the liberal political culture and institutions of the United States and the power-centric and nationalistic ideals that have traditionally governed our country’s foreign policy. Particular emphasis will be placed on the motivations and tactics that have fueled the expansionist ambitions of our society over the past 400 years and the forces, both domestic and foreign, which have sought to limit both the size and scope of the "American Empire". We will also examine both the political and moral implications associated with being the world’s first global "empire" as well as the social, economic and political forces contributing to anti-American sentiment and political action in Latin America, Asia and the Islamic world since the turn of the 20th century.
Section 5: Friendship in the Western World: Ancient Greece, Modern and Contemporary Perspectives  
– A. Archie

TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

The purpose of the seminar is to critically analyze the ancient Greek conception of friendship – philia - (i.e., Plato and Aristotle) in relation to early modern and contemporary conceptions of friendship. According to Aristotle, friendship has to do with the self. Thus, in reflecting on friendship we enter upon self-discovery. In contrast to the ancients’ preoccupation with the self, modern and contemporary reflections on friendship tend to focus on rules and acts. The main question of the seminar is, “Which position on friendship is more compelling: the ancient Greek, modern or contemporary position?”

Section 6: Tikkun Olam – A. Merline

TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM

"Tikkun Olam” is a Jewish concept defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world. The phrase is found in the Mishnah, a body of classical rabbinic teachings. It is often used when discussing issues of social policy, ensuring a safeguard to those who may be at a disadvantage. This course is about community engagement and activism. Using Bowling Alone, The Community Resilience Reader and The Great Good Place we will learn effective community organizing, how to work with existing municipal, grassroots and other local groups to identify and complete one or several projects that need to be completed in Fort Collins that have to do with human and environmental sustainability.

Section 7 & 8: You’d be Murdered for This: Art, Political Regimes and Morality – S. Zwick-Tapley

Section 7: TR 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM
Section 8: MW 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM

Imagine a painting so scandalous you'd be imprisoned. Imagine a play so threatening you'd be tortured. Imagine a book so controversial you'd be exiled for life. Imagine a film so revolutionary you'd be killed. Throughout history art has challenged dictators, religion and sexual norms and has been blamed for the destruction of morality and civilization. What are these works of art and what made them so threatening? And did these works of art succeed in bringing about the change so feared? This class will explore controversial art from around the world and look at the political, sociological, and psychological frameworks specific to each culture. Art forms covered will include theatre, dance, the visual arts, film and literature. (Warning: The material in this class may be offensive to some students. This class covers extensive sexual violence.)