Graduating seniors in the Honors College at UMass Boston at the 2016 Medallion Ceremony.
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Summer 2021 Honors College Courses
(via remote synchronous instruction)
Summer Session 1, June 1st - July 15th, 2021

Please note: If you’re interested in registering for either or both of our Honors College courses in Summer 2021, please email Jason.Roush@umb.edu directly, and he’ll be happy to add the course to your summer schedule. Also, please note that if you’re financially eligible for Pell Grants, they can be applied as financial aid to cover your summer courses by enrolling for a minimum of 6 credits in Summer 2021.

Honors 293 (01A): Approaches to Human Sexuality (#2022)
TuTh 10:00am - 1:00pm
Jason Roush, Honors College

Human sexuality is continually evolving within cultural contexts. Widespread social factors like economics, education, family, geography, religion, and law shape how we come to perceive sexual identity and ourselves. In turn, sexuality is equally powerful in shaping society and social norms, both through organized political movements and through interpersonal relationships. How have our understandings of sexuality and gender identity shifted over the past fifty years? What will be the future of sexuality in coming decades?

Through historical readings and contemporary theory, along with films and other media, this course explores the changing social constructions of sexual identity and pivotal moments in LGBTQ history, as well as examining how heterosexuality and LGBTQ identities influence and interface with each other. Some specific topics that we will study and discuss include:

- community organizations and social events related to sexual identity
- same-sex marriage equality and alternative families
- the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the 1980s and beyond
- changing conceptions of bisexuality and "heteroflexibility"
- social activism focused on issues of gender and sexual identity
- emergence of transgender and intersexual identities and communities
- issues surrounding asexuality, consent, disability, race, and sex education.

In addition to writing some short in-class response papers (1 - 2 pages each) based on course topics, students will write one final essay of 5 - 7 pages on a relevant community organization or social event of their choice. A brief class presentation (10 - 15 minutes) on that organization or social event will also be required. Active local engagement with community-based organizations will be highly encouraged, and we will hope to attend a relevant event together outside of class if possible.

This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement.

TuTh 1:30 - 4:30pm
Linda Holcombe, Global Governance & Human Security

What does it mean to have human security? Health security? National security? The idea of being “secure” has shifted dramatically over the past century with the introduction of new technologies and an interconnected global community. The everyday now has ties to the everywhere. Questions of gender, human rights, conflict, and sustainability permeate almost everything we do. This course will introduce more questions than it will answer and emphasize complexity and nuance over simple solutions. Readings and discussions will cover a wide range of disciplines including international relations, sociology, environmental, and political science literature, as well as skills-based topics like writing, conflict resolution, and conducting research. You’ll have the opportunity to more deeply engage international issues on your radar, as well as discover new ones, through interdisciplinary learning.

In this junior colloquium we will explore complex global challenges while working toward a major writing assignment (of 12 to 16 pages in length), in order to help prepare you for junior and senior thesis-based seminars. You may conduct your research on a topic of your choosing relevant to complex global issues. The course will integrate topical information with
skills-based learning to develop the project piece by piece throughout the semester. You will be introduced to a wide array of potential issues in the world today, as well as multiple perspectives through which to explore them, which may be integrated into your final project. Writing assignments include informal weekly reflections and stage-based pieces working up to the larger research project at the end of the course.

This course fulfills the Honors Junior Colloquium requirement.

Considering the Pass/Fail option for an Honors course for the Spring 2021

Check out our student resources page to find out more information about the Honors College Pass/Fail option for Spring 2021 here!

Remember to speak with your Professor and advisor before making a decision!

Fall 2021 Honors College 200-level Courses

Honors 210G (1): Learning Biology through Reading Fiction and Non-fiction (#10446)
MWF 2:00 - 2:50pm
Megan Rokop, Honors College

This course is designed to be an introduction to many current and relevant topics in biology, but with a twist – namely that these topics will be introduced and discussed as they come up in popular and highly regarded books written for non-scientists. In this course, we will use the reading of four books (including fiction and non-fiction), in order to guide our learning of topics in biology. Possible books might include: *Lightning Flowers*, *The Code Breaker*, *The Collected Schizophrenias*, *The Genome Odyssey*, *Cured*, *The Inheritance*, and *Happiness*.

The instructor’s current plan for these books (though it is possible that these selections may change before the first day of class) means that our class will focus on the following topics in biology:

- **Bioethics**: DNA testing, “designer babies,” informed consent, and animal research
- **Human disease**: Cancers, infectious diseases (such as HIV and malaria), single-gene disorders (such as cystic fibrosis and Huntington’s), and common complex disorders (such as heart disease and schizophrenia)
- **Discovering cures and treatments**: Drug development, clinical trials, the cost of drugs, placebos, funding and patenting scientific discoveries
- **Public health**: Vaccines, antibiotics, and medicine in the US & around the world

This course will not involve textbook readings, exams, advanced calculations, or memorizing terms. The in-class activities will focus on class discussions, and your grade in this course will be determined by:

- Attendance & class participation
- Nine short (300-word) writing assignments
- A 1500-word paper on a topic of your choice relating to the 1st book
- A 1500-word paper on a topic of your choice relating to the 2nd book
- A 10-minute oral presentation on a topic of your choice relating to the 3rd book

This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) distribution requirement.
Honors 210G (2): The Science and Social Impact of Baseball (#10447)  
TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm (offered only via on-campus instruction)  
Steve Ackerman, Honors College  

For more than 150 years, baseball has both reflected American society and left its imprint on American consciousness. This course is designed for all students, regardless of background knowledge of science or social science. Science concepts discussed in class will be general. Helping students achieve the capabilities of writing are achieved through creative writing assignments.

Baseball has more superstition and “magic” than perhaps any other sport. Yet there is real science involved in this sport, but it is often ignored or misunderstood. Baseball also impacts our social and behavioral attitudes such as class issues, sex issues, equality among ethnicities, etc. In this course we will examine what happens when a pitch is thrown, a ball is batted, a ball is fielded, as well as the social impact of baseball on society and how baseball reflects societal norms.

There will be a plethora of guests throughout this course, including a baseball bat company, historian, sports executives, baseball coaches, baseball commissioner, scientists, MLB players, training personnel, sportscasters, etc. There will be no exams. Students will have six writing assignments: three brief written responses (1 - 2 pages), two short papers (2 - 3 pages), one longer paper (> 5 pages, with five references required), as well as an oral class presentation.

This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) requirement.

Honors 210G (3): The #MeToo Movement in Film and Literature (#10448)  
TuTh 9:30 - 10:45am  
Carney Maley, Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies  

This course begins with a brief history of the #Me Too movement starting with Anita Hill, who brought national attention to sexual harassment in the workplace in 1991, followed by activist Tarana Burke who created a space for women survivors of color in 2006, and finally the New York Times reporters who, in 2017, first broke the Harvey Weinstein story that ignited a movement.

Using an intersectional feminist lens, we will examine how #MeToo evolved from survivors sharing their stories of harassment and abuse on social media to a more organized movement for social and economic justice. We will consider questions such as: What role do race, class, gender, and sexuality play in whose stories get told? And in whose stories are believed? Whose voices are still missing from this movement?

Through memoirs, essays, and documentary films, we will look at how the #MeToo movement is represented through contemporary non-fiction forms of popular media. By exploring narrative films and short stories, we will analyze how fictional texts can complicate and illuminate everyday issues of power and consent in a way that is not always possible in the context of the workplace or courtroom. In other words, what can these visual and written texts tell us about the ways that the movement and survivors themselves have been depicted?

Students will write short responses to their “book group” book, do an oral presentation, and write three essays analyzing both written and visual texts.

This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) requirement.

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Honors 291 (1): Literature and Biopolitics (#3338)  
MWF 11:00 - 11:50am  
Avak Hasratian, English

We live in an age defined by the fragility of human and non-human life and the dependence of both on limited resources. “Biopolitics” describes this process: we are changing into collectively generic masses and bodies that are not equally individuated. Some humans can be animalized and perish, whereas others are elevated. Between the two extremes is life itself, and this is where “biopower” operates.

This is not a purely “negative” phenomenon. Biopower, to quote the man who coined the term, “is the power to make live” as it “literally ignores death” (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp. 247 and 248). As a result of power’s retreat from death and the advance of life, we must wrap our heads around this fact: “[T]oday we may be living in the most peaceable era in our species’ existence…. [This is] an unmistakable development, visible on scales from millennia to years, from the waging of wars to the spanking of children” (*Pinker, The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence HasDeclined*, xxi). At no time in the history of our species have as many humans been alive, and living generally better, longer lives, more or less free of the constant threat of violent death.

In this same spirit, short fiction, novels, television, and films pick up on these ideas, not to show us how hopeless life is, but rather the opposite. Rather than give in to cynicism or pessimism, art turns against the forces of dehumanization and de-individualization, because imagining our own destruction is a lot better than experiencing it. Course assignments will include creative writing, critical papers, and class presentations.

*This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.*

Honors 291 (2): One-Hundred Years of Badass Women in Literature and Film: A Retrospective (#3339)  
TuTh 12:30 - 1:45pm  
Julie Batten, Honors College

In an age of legislative switchbacks and potential decreasing liberties for women, why are we all knitting hats? Why now? What has at last brought us to the pulpit to testify against yesteryear’s *Animal House* behavior? What gives certain women, in both life and literature, the ability to transcend the confines of an ever-present patriarchy? Who are our teachers, and who are our contemporaries?

From Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* to Stieg Larson’s Lisbeth in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, this course will examine popular female icons through each decade of the last hundred years. What does it mean to drop the “F-bomb” at a party these days? What will it take for fourth-wave feminism to be successful? Together we will read and discuss and plot.

In this class we will also watch movies (*Suffragette, Thelma & Louise, Erin Brockovich, Frida, Out of Africa*), read books (*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, The Color Purple, The Handmaid’s Tale* and others), knit hats, and petition the State House. Assignments will include two shorter essays of 4 - 5 pages (a literary comparison paper and a persuasive essay), and a longer final creative essay of 6 - 8 pages.

*This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.*

Honors 292 (1): The World of Hip-Hop: An Inside View (#3340)  
TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm  
Jared Bridgeman (Akrobatik), Honors College

“Rap is something you do; Hip-Hop is something you live.” – KRS-ONE

This multidisciplinary course will introduce students to Hip-Hop in all of its complexity—through careful historical inquiry, rigorous historical analysis, and creative practice. The course will combine the interdisciplinary scholarly methods that comprise American Studies and cultural studies work, with a strong commitment to exploring the creative and practical challenges facing practitioners of the Hip-Hop arts.
The instructor (Boston's own Akrobatik, a 20+ year Hip-Hop veteran described by *Billboard* magazine as one of "Hip-Hop's most politically conscious emcees") will bring expertise in scholarly, creative, community, and performative work to the teaching of the class and will expect students to be committed to a type of hybrid inquiry that equally emphasizes scholarly and creative work. Students will read and discuss scholarly works (by historians, musicologists, sociologists, and so on), in order to more fully understand Hip-Hop's complicated trajectory via assigned listening playlists.

Students will engage with scholarly, journalistic, and autobiographical writing as they begin their study of Hip-Hop history. They will also regularly participate in workshops and group discussions that focus on Hip-Hop's many disciplines, or "elements," as they hone their own writing and artistic skills. Interviews of world-class artists and class field trips to studios, shows, and even Hip-Hop's birthplace in the Bronx, have been amongst the experiences of past participants in the course. Assignments will include an oral presentation on Hip-Hop abroad, a 3-page song analysis, and either a creative project (with scholarly annotation) or a research paper.

*This course fulfills a Humanities (HU) distribution requirement, and it can also be counted towards the Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity Minor.*

**Honors 292 (2): U.S. Foreign Policy since 1898 (#4206)**  
*TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm*  
*Paul Atwood, American Studies (Retired)*

Since the horrific events of September 11th, 2001, the United States has faced one foreign policy crisis after another. Many believe that we are in new territory in our relations with the rest of the world. But is this true? Standard American ideology maintains that our foreign relations are predicated on a desire to promote freedom, democracy, human rights, and a peaceful, stable world environment. And yet chaos reigns. The mass media imply that the crises facing the U.S. are the fault of those who wish us harm, but well-respected critics offer very different interpretations, even though their perspectives rarely reach mass audiences.

What does the history of American foreign policy over the last century or so have to teach us about ourselves and our interactions with other peoples and nations? Is it true that the United States has gone to war only reluctantly in opposition to the threats and aggressions of other states and individuals? Has Washington D.C. always fostered and promoted democracies and avoided conflict at all costs? Can we identify the underlying motivations and aims for specific policies carried out at different times? What may a critical examination of key episodes in the nation’s foreign affairs since the late 19th century to the present inform us about the present or what to anticipate for the future?

The key events to be explored are the Philippine War of 1899-1902, World Wars I & II, the Cold War (including the Korean and Vietnam Wars), and the current crises vis-à-vis the Islamic world and North Korea. Assignments include two short papers on assigned topics (5 pages each), a research paper (10 pages) on a topic of the student's choice, and a Map Exam.

*This course fulfills a Humanities (HU) distribution requirement.*

**Honors 293 (1): The Biology and Psychology of Being a Dad (#3341)**  
*TuTh 9:30 - 10:45am*  
*Randy Corpuz, Honors College and Psychology*

What does it mean to be male? What does it mean to be a father? Are these terms defined biologically, or do culture and society play a role in their development? How and why are "males" and "fathers" in American society different than in other cultures, and across history?

Despite the perceived benefits that fathers afford to offspring, only 5% of mammals have any sort of paternal care. Within the human species, the levels of paternal care observed across cultures (and throughout history) are extremely variable. What accounts for this variability? We will explore how adult males face a tradeoff between putting effort toward mating (e.g., pursuing sex) or parenting (e.g., spending time with children), and how one's childhood environment plays a major role in how this tradeoff is managed.
If the ultimate “goal” of reproduction (from a biological and evolutionary perspective) is to ensure that children survive, why is fatherhood so variable? How has evolution shaped the biology and psychology of reproduction (i.e., mating and parenting)? How can an evolutionary perspective on male behavior aid in our understanding of fatherhood in the 21st century? In combining readings from neuroscience, anthropology, and biology with materials from literature, history, and art, students will gain a multifaceted appreciation for the complexity of male behavior.

This interdisciplinary course is highly interdisciplinary. The class will include lectures, class discussions, two oral presentations, several short writing assignments (1 - 2 pages), and a final paper (approximately 6 - 8 pages). The final paper will require students to integrate material from a broad range of disciplines. Students will be encouraged to include material that they find outside of class to add to the breadth of their final papers.

This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement.

Honors 293 (2): Climate Change and Public Health (#3342)
TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm
C. Eduardo Siqueira, School for the Environment

This course provides an overview of climate change in the contexts of public health and climate science, as well as issues and challenges for research. The course describes the adverse health consequences of climate change, with particular focus on climate justice, and measures to prevent them; it will also discuss multiple and interconnected approaches for addressing climate change.

Students will read and review in class chapters from the book Climate Change and Public Health, and peer-reviewed articles on the intersection of climate change and public health. Students will also watch documentaries and short videos addressing climate change and public health issues. Students will answer quizzes and present a group final project on climate change and public health issues that they choose.

This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement.

Honors 293 (3): Human Rights and Human Societies (#3343)
MW 4:00 - 5:15pm
Esther Kamau, School for Global Inclusion & Social Development

Complexities of human rights and responsibilities of humans in society are as old as humankind. Communities around the world have for centuries identified people’s rights and guaranteed their protection. Rights have been critical instruments for supporting fairness, equity, and social justice for all, both individuals and groups considered as insiders, but also for outsiders. This course focuses on the role of human rights in creating inclusive communities and societies.

This course begins by critically analyzing the historical context that gave rise to the establishment of human rights: the history of the United Nations and the UN Charter, the creation of the UDHR, the development of the Covenants, and concurrent human rights treaties and instruments. Next, the course examines the ways in which these international human rights instruments inform the local contexts in different parts of the world to address human rights challenges through the use of case studies. The use of case studies will afford us an opportunity for analysis highlighting the tensions, opportunities, contradictions, limitations, and attainments of international human rights norms and instruments.

Students will learn from case studies, book chapters, journal articles, short videos, and guest speakers. Assignments will include weekly readings and reflections, class discussions, group presentations, a short paper, and an end of semester paper.

This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement, and it can also be counted towards the Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity Minor.
Honors 293 (4): Refugee and Migrant “Crises”: Challenges, Rights, and Responses (#3785)
TuTh 8:00 - 9:15am
David Sulewski, Global Governance & Human Security

Today, more than 80 million people are displaced worldwide, the highest number ever recorded. Refugee “crises” around the world have become a global priority. How can we respond to the challenges of forced migration and protect refugees’ rights? We will tackle a variety of challenges related to forced migration and examine how it intersects with other contemporary issues such as the climate crisis, the global pandemic, and ultra-nationalism. While exploring the multiple factors that cause forced displacement and shape policy responses, we will foreground the agency and freedom of refugees as well as those who work either to welcome or exclude them.

Students will gain an in-depth understanding of the international refugee regime and the international legal instruments designed to uphold refugees’ rights. Beyond the key international actors, such as the United Nations, students will learn about a wide variety of non-governmental actors responding to refugee crises.

Course readings are drawn from books (both fiction and non-fiction), academic articles, and news stories. We will connect class discussions to current events and have guest speakers. This is a discussion-based class with a strong emphasis on class participation. Assignments include short reflection papers, a mid-term, and a final paper (5-8 pages) and class presentation.

This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement, and it can also be counted towards the Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity Minor.

Honors 294 (1): The Argentine Tango: Dance, Music, and Culture (#3344)
TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm
Mary Oleskiewicz, Performing Arts

In the late 19th-century, urban lower classes developed the tradition of the dancing the tango in Buenos Aires, Argentina. European immigrants and descendants of African slaves contributed their customs and rituals to what became a distinct national identity. Through the singer Gardel, tango was transported to Paris in the 1920s and danced by the upper classes. The Argentine dictatorship (1976 to 1983) forbade the sensual tango, but it continued to be danced covertly, only increasing its appeal. In the decades since, tango has become a global phenomenon, connecting people of diverse backgrounds and transcending stereotyped notions of gender identity.

This course offers a thorough introduction to the culture and history, music and dance of one of Latin America’s most intriguing art forms. Classes meet in UMass Boston’s new state-of-the-art dance studio in University Hall, with spectacular views overlooking the ocean and Boston’s skyline. We will study tango music, lyrics, films, images, and literature from the early 20th-century to the present. The instructor, an expert in performing both the dance and the music, will provide weekly, progressive dance lessons in social tango, in which everyone will learn to lead and follow. We will sample Argentine culinary traditions, experience workshops and presentations by experts in folkloric dance, and learn about thrilling Gaucho (cowboy) traditions such as boleadoras (throwing weapons). Assignments will include films, reading, journal writing, practicing tango, and a term paper (10 pages) or 3-minute partnered dance presentation (or another approved project). No prior dance experience is required!

This course fulfills a World Cultures (WC) distribution requirement.

Honors 294 (2): Old World, New Eyes: Looking at Global Challenges through New Lenses (#3345)
MW 4:00 - 5:15pm
Linda Holcombe, Global Governance & Human Security

The last few years have taught us a lot. If nothing else, we’ve become more aware of the need re-examine persistent problems and question the status quo. The interconnectivity of the world through globalization raises new dimensions for old challenges and forces us to re-assess questions that were never fully resolved to begin with. How do we balance vaccine or medical intellectual property concerns and widespread distribution? How do we approach human rights abuses in an interconnected world? What does it mean to be democratic?
This course integrates lessons from conflict resolution, international relations, cross-cultural communication, and a variety of interdisciplinary topics to practice looking at complex problems in nuanced ways. We will start by establishing a few baseline sociological, communication, and conflict resolution concepts. After building the tools for better discussion and understanding, we will explore a survey of issues through cases from around the world. The class will mostly be discussion-based with weekly reflection assignments. Major assignments include two short essays (4-5 pages each): a semester-long book reflection and a conflict analysis. Minor assignments include a short participatory paper and discussion-based writing.

This course fulfills a World Cultures (WC) distribution requirement, and it can also be counted towards the Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity Minor.

**Honors 295 (1): Unheralded Women of Science and Technology (#10449)**

**TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm**

*Steven Ackerman, Honors College*

This course will address some of the forgotten women who contributed to society either directly or indirectly, but whom history has relegated to obscurity. We will omit those women who have received historical acknowledgment (such as Marie Curie). Although we will focus mainly on 20th century women of achievement, there are women of science dating back much farther than the 18th century. A good staring place, however, is in the 18th century with Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet (Émilie du Châtelet, Madame du Châtelet) who was a brilliant natural philosopher, mathematician, physicist, and author during the early 1730s. Several other women from the 18th and 19th centuries will be also profiled, such as Caroline Herschel and Ada Lovelace.

One of the best and most brilliant scientists of the 20th century was Barbara McClintock, a botanist, geneticist, and cytogeneticist who was both prescient and prophetic. Mary McMillan invented physical therapy as we know and practice it today. Mileva Maric, Albert Einstein's first wife, was responsible for his famous publications because it was she, a luminous physicist and mathematician, who checked his calculations and made corrections, prior to publication. Similarly, Lise Meitner is an unknown but important physicist.

Other notable women we will discuss are Rosalind Franklin/Florence Bell (biophysics), Ruth Sager (genetics), the Code Girls (they solved the codes the axis powers used in WWII), the Radium Girls, Henrietta Lacks, Grace Hopper/Jean Sammet (computer language and programming), Alice Hamilton/Alice Waters (FDA & food science), Rachel Carson (the mother of environmentalism), Theo Colborn (the successor to Carson), Mammie Smith (musical inventor of the blues [1920s] and originator of Black Lives Matter), Jane Goodall/Diann Fosse (kinship between humans and animals - animal behaviorists), rocket girls (think Hidden Figures - the women who made the space program), Margaret Mead/Ruth Benedict (cultural anthropology), and fly girls (women who pioneered aviation).

There will be six writing assignments: three short research papers (student chooses the topic) and three short response papers to articles or movies, plus one oral class presentation.

This course fulfills a Natural Sciences (NS) distribution requirement.

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Do you have more than 75 credits?

Then it's time to start talking about your Senior Thesis!

If you have more than 75 credits, it's time to talk with your Honors College advisor about your senior thesis. All Honors College students are required to complete a senior thesis, including both a thesis paper and an oral presentation, or an alternative senior project.

For more information about how the thesis can connect with your major and how the process works, please consult your Honors College advisor.
Fall 2021 Honors College Junior Colloquia

You must have completed at least two Honors courses at the 200-level to take the Junior Colloquium.

Honors 380 (1): Personalized Medicine (#1682)
Thursday 9:30am - 12:15pm
S. Tiffany Donaldson, Honors College and Psychology

Have you heard of the term personalized medicine? What does it mean? How could it be achieved? Who is working on it? Who would it benefit? These questions will be tackled in this course as we learn about how mapping the human genome (1990-2003) intended to improve therapies for diseases – by focusing on genes. More specifically, the course will focus on (1) pharmacogenetics and profiling patients for prescribing drugs, (2) parameters of including environmental contexts, (3) practices of community-based participatory research and knowledge transfer (i.e., from the academy to health disparity communities), (4) accessible science and communicating with non-scientists, and (5) barriers to equity in this approach. Students will read primary literature, health disparity work on cancer and other chronic diseases, and writings about personalized medicine framing the discussion, including Personalized Medicine: Empowered Patients in the 21st Century (Barbara Prainsack, New York University Press, 2017).

Students will learn key concepts in pharmacogenetics, study basic pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics, get exposure to the drug development process (its successes and shortcomings), and discuss mistrust of medicine/researchers in select communities of color. Students will contribute to their learning through writings about readings (1) Reaction journals (2-3 pp weekly; 20% of grade), (2) Class discussion response(s) to prompts in class (3-4 sentences; 20% of grade), (3) Final poster presentation (30% of grade) and (4) Final 8-10 page essay (30% of grade; ~2300 words) on personalized medicine including benefits and barriers discussed in class regarding racial/cultural access and trust, inside/outside the academy, and using knowledge transfer.

Honors 380 (2): Thinking about Climate Change (#3337)
Tuesday 12:30 - 3:15pm
Reinmar Seidler, Biology

Climate change is set to be the biggest challenge of the 21st century. Over the last few years, the issue has figured a little more prominently in the US media and public discourse, yet many of us still feel confused about the details. We may feel overwhelmed by the apparent complexity of the climate problem, and by the technical nature of the arguments. However, this course requires no advanced scientific background. The emphasis will be on critical thinking, critical reading, imaginative engagement, and clear communication.

We will begin by examining the evidence for the claim that human actions are causing significant changes in global climate patterns. We will then explore some of the ways people from different backgrounds and different walks of life are thinking, talking, and writing about climate change today, both in America and in the wider world. We will focus especially on the “social imaginaries” around climate change, such as:

- how people see the future under expected climate change;
- how politics plays into our fears and imagination;
- how we can assess historical and current responsibilities for climate change;
- how climate questions compete with other issues in media and public awareness;
- how, armed with knowledge, we can help move society onto sustainable pathways.

Readings will include peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, book chapters, fiction, news reports, and supplemental materials. There will be weekly writing assignments, 2-3 oral presentations, and a major individual research report, in which each student will analyze and report on a proposed solution to anthropogenic climate distortion.
MWF 12:00 - 12:50pm
Todd Droggy, English

What does it mean to be human? Simone de Beauvoir’s statement that “to be is to have become” suggests that the concept of who and what we are can only be understood within the matrix of history, knowledge, and culture. Never has this been more apparent than in the present moment, when rapid developments in science and technology raise fundamental questions about human nature.

In this course, students will explore how our understanding of who and what we are is shifting beneath our feet. In particular, we will examine the scientific discoveries, technological developments, and cultural practices transforming traditional conceptions of self/consciousness, gender/sexuality, race, and labor. We will also consider how fundamental conceptions of human nature are likely to change as science and technology continue to open doors to new realms of knowledge and experience.

Students will read a diverse array of scientific, social science, and philosophical texts, watch sci-fi movies/shows, read science fiction, and explore other contemporary forms of media. Throughout the semester, we will return to the following two questions: How are advances in science and technology shifting our personal and collective experiences of being human? And, how do cultural assumptions about human nature affect the trajectories of scientific research and technological innovation?

Major assignments will consist of four mini-essays, two group presentations, a reflection journal, and a final research paper. Class participation is weighted heavily in this discussion-oriented course.

Honors 380 (4): Science Fiction and Philosophy (#3786)
Tu/Th 12:30 - 1:45pm
Nir Eisikovits, Philosophy
James J. Hughes, Institutional Research & Policy Studies

What does it mean to be the same person throughout one’s life? Are we defined by our memories or by our most basic tendencies and desires? If you could remember everything that happened to you and vividly recall it in high-definition video, would that make your life better or worse? If you clearly remember something that didn't happen, does it really matter that the memory is fake? If you were able to find out how your life would have turned out if you made some key different choices (whom to marry, what to major in), would you really want to know?

These are questions that have long fascinated philosophers and psychologists, and they are also at the heart of much science fiction. In this class we will explore the relationship between science fiction, philosophy, and the social sciences by looking at some key texts and movies in all genres. We'll ask what science fiction has to teach us about basic philosophical questions, what philosophy can offer us about how to read science fiction, and what the social sciences can bring to the table in evaluating the claims of both. Reading materials will include selections from works by David Hume, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Ted Chiang, and Philip K. Dick, among many others. A substantial final research essay is required in all Honors College junior colloquia.

Join the Honors College Discord Server!
https://discord.gg/zu3NnDpWQd
Welcome to Honors College