Recent Honors Colloquia Courses (HONR 3000)

SPRING 2018

Sacred Places, Matt Patton
What does sacred mean? What makes a place sacred? Does a sacred place have to be somewhere you can visit? In Omaha and Nebraska, natural and built landscapes, art installations, and works of literature surround us. These places and items may or may not be interpreted as sacred. In this course, we will discuss the nature of sacred. How do humans construct sacred spaces and places? Is sacred reserved for holy sites or can we label anything as sacred? In addition to reading about sacred places, we will be visiting local sites that can be interpreted as sacred. We will explore sacred views in religion, literature, history, art, geography, and other subjects. We will have the opportunity to listen to guest speakers discuss the nature of sacred and visit sites that may be considered sacred.

Sacred and Violent, Ramazan Kilinc
This course will investigate the complex relationship between religion and violence in the three major Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), covering a wide span of states and societies from the Middle East to the United States, from ancient times until the modern era, with more emphasis on the latter. This interdisciplinary course will examine historical, political, economic, sociological, anthropological and psychological reasons behind religion-related violence in a comparative perspective. Building on historical experience the course will also identify the conditions for co-existence and religious pluralism. To analyze the individual stories of religious co-existence, students are expected to conduct fieldwork and interviews with members of Omaha’s Tri-Faith Initiative and, in so doing, will connect the theoretical knowledge on religion, violence and peace with practical experiences of real people from the community. This service learning project will produce an informal history of the emergence of the Tri-Faith Initiative and teach the students the challenges and opportunities of religious pluralism in an era of increasing global polarization.

Maverick Start-Ups, Dale Eesley
Students taking this class will learn how entrepreneurial behavior empowers them to assess risk and take action, leading to the creation of new businesses, social enterprises or corporate practices that have an impact on themselves and others. The course will focus on the Lean Startup methodology, which applies the scientific process of validating hypotheses to radically improve the odds of startup success. Lectures on management, marketing, human resources and finance are specially crafted to address the entrepreneur’s most critical needs. Students will read books from the popular business press as well as make use of an online platform designed to guide them through the lean startup process. The key deliverable for each student team will be a presentation of a validated business model canvas for a new product or service. The class is taught as a workshop with numerous guest speakers.

Communication, Meaning and Culture, Abbie Syrek
Communication, Meaning, and Culture is a dynamic course that explores the many ways in which communication affects our personal, professional, and social lives. We will consider a wide range of communication phenomenon and learn how unique contexts shape our creation and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal messages. The course will examine how communication symbolically shapes our world and how we interpret and assign meaning to our environment. Students will apply communication theory to a variety of issues, including our intrapersonal self talk, family dynamics, romantic relationships, gender, culture, race, physical appearance, the media, and even the meaning behind the
food we eat and its personal and social significance. The course will also prepare students to analyze and critique the communication of others and implement problem-solving solutions into personal, professional, and civic life. Students will gain skills to improve their use of communication as a tool for success and empowerment.

**Viruses and Society, Bill Tapprich and Lucy Morrison**

Viruses surround us, lurking on door handles, on coins, in the very air we breathe. But what happens when we encounter new viruses—and how does society react? In this Honors colloquium, students will be exposed (pun intended) to the establishment, history, and development of two viruses in particular, considering their scientific origins and evolution as well as how they infiltrated real and popular human society and culture. We’ll start with HIV in the 1980s and consider literary reactions to as well as the fundamental science of its progress around the globe. Then we’ll move to a more recent threat: Ebola. Students will be challenged to follow the science and literary creations of these viruses and explore both disciplines’ reactions to and manipulations of viruses.

**FALL 2017**

**American Immigration History and Literature, Danielle Battisti and Charles Johnanningsmeier**

*Students must take both courses: a course devoted to American Immigration History and another focused on U.S. Immigrant Narratives.* The United States historically characterizes itself as “a nation of immigrants,” with the Statue of Liberty as its greatest symbol. Yet when this claim is examined more carefully, the emerging picture is much more complicated. These two linked courses will expand students’ knowledge of the actual history of immigration to the United States, how immigrants have been treated by people already here, and the ways in which immigrants have responded to their experiences. The courses will examine how and why certain groups migrated to the United States, how immigrants shaped the development of the nation, and how immigrants and ethnic groups in America were in turn shaped by American society, politics, and laws.

**Free Expression and Social Media, Jeremy Lipschultz**

This course explores historical ideas about free speech, the First Amendment and international law, as well as policies and ethics, to understand current interest in social media. Through case studies and best practices, students will learn about successes and failures of communication within social network sites. Computer-mediated communication offers challenges and opportunities for learning about human behavior through core concepts of identity, interaction and community. By examining “big data” analysis techniques, privacy policies and media (journalism, PR, advertising and marketing) literacy, students will be empowered to use social media more effectively, cultivate a “personal brand,” and make meaningful professional network connections.

**City of Omaha, Lucy Morrison**

How does a city work? This course asks students to engage in their own urban environment and explore some of the many facets that make Omaha the city it is. This course will include experiential opportunities (there will be field trips) that illuminate how the city beyond UNO came to be established, developed, and has grown and adjusted over the years. Students will be expected to develop and pursue their own lines of questioning in researching and documenting an area of interest within the city beyond those addressed in the course; service learning with Omaha’s City Planning Department will be part of our class work. Students will read from a variety of genres and sources as well as developing their own writing and researching practices. Journey through Omaha with fellow Honors students!
SPRING 2017

Eiseley’s Century: Naturalist & Modern Shaman, Chris Dando, Bing Chen & George Engelmann
In this interdisciplinary seminar-style course, we will explore the works of Loren Eiseley, a native Nebraskan whose intense curiosity and keen observation led him to a career in science as an anthropologist. But his most influential and enduring legacy has been his essays and other writings that communicate his unique perspective on the nature of the universe at all scales—as well as our place in it. Eiseley’s territory is the intersection of science, philosophy, art and environmentalism. Given current concerns about our environment as well as our place in the universe, it is wholly appropriate that we examine Eiseley’s writing and its power to communicate, evoke, and inspire. Join us in this colloquium as we enter into and explore Eiseley’s world.

Nostalgia, Todd Richardson
Nostalgia (OED defined as a sentimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual’s own lifetime) occupies a prominent yet fraught place within American culture. Often, nostalgia is viewed as a foolish sentimentality or, worse, as a perspective that glosses over past injustices; nostalgia can be beneficial to individuals, particularly in terms of mental health and social engagement. This colloquium will interrogate nostalgia’s complicated nature, considering its personal, cultural and political aspects through addressing American expressive culture in literature, films and television. Studying Willa Cather’s My Antonia, a complex literary representation of (and meditation on) nostalgia, will lead us to Red Cloud, Cather’s hometown and the novel’s setting. We will also consider the foundational role nostalgia plays in television programming, along with more personal expressions of nostalgia (e.g. the sharing of photographs), and the class’s major projects will encourage students to read and analyze everyday performances of nostalgia (this course has a service learning component).

Information, Biases, and Decisions, Jennifer Riley
Do people seem smarter if they use big words? Are you more likely to purchase something labeled “half off” or “save 50%”? Judgments we form and decisions we make are based on information we receive and how we process it. In this course, we will examine business and accounting information and how it is used to make decisions; we will also consider a variety of cognitive biases (the brain shortcuts that lead us to make decisions based on distortion, shortcuts, perceptual blindness, irrationality and ego) that contribute to bad decisions and misjudgments. We will need to address how information can be used to take advantage of cognitive biases to manipulate and influence others’ decisions. Our primary method of study will center around analysis of business and everyday world cases where information is used and misused—and where cognitive biases played a role.

Maps and Society, Matthew Patton
Maps are all around us and can contain limitless information. In “Maps and Society: Stone Age to Present Day” we will explore the nature of maps throughout history. We will view and analyze maps as works of art, community engagement, historical records, interactive media, politics, propaganda, religion, and as tools. Through the examination of select maps and map styles, students will gain a better understanding of how societies have portrayed their homelands and the world. We will also discuss the cartographic elements that make some maps more effective forms of communication than others. Over the course of the semester, we will create, interact with, and critique maps and implications for their use and interpretation. Through this process, we will discover there is more than one way to view a map.
Hate Groups & Domestic Terrorism, Gina Ligon
This colloquium focuses on domestic hate groups and violent extremism; much of our energy will be spent examining why people hate, the factors that help produce domestic terrorism, and what society should do to counter this type of extremism. Students will cultivate two different types of cognitive and emotional skills: critical thinking and empathetic understanding. I will stress self-initiative, independent research and reading, and creative expression in response to both the assigned material and to the material you discover on your own. Class sessions will feature lively discussions of the material and current events as they unfold, and there may be some challenging texts and subjects with which we will have to engage. Come and learn more about the world around you—and some of the challenges we face in it today.

Innovation Unbound, Arthur Diamond
The “Great Fact” of economics is the spectacular rise in the length and quality of life that took off in the West about 250 years ago; understanding that “Great Fact” is key to continuing the human flourishing and economic dynamism most of us want. My in-progress book on Innovation Unbound, to be published by Oxford University Press, looks at the causes and effects of innovation, and this colloquium will explore the interdisciplinary roots of innovation and its progress. Sources include economics as well as management, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and biology; students will review and write and edit and explore. Come and innovate!

Literature and War, Lucy Morrison
What happens beyond the battlefield? This course considers war’s fringes—fictional looks at what happens when soldiers come home or while soldiers are gone. How are other-than-soldiers impacted by war, both in the country where combat is situated and those left at “home”? We’ll consider 20th century fiction, pairing Rebecca West’s Return of the Soldier with the “saddest story” of Ford Madox Ford’s The Good Soldier, before reading William Styron’s Sophie’s Choice, Gil Courtemanche’s A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali (viewing Hotel Rwanda); and more. Although the course’s subject matter is full of sadness, the glory of the prose will underscore art’s power to create beauty even from the ravages of humanity’s worst experiences.
The Melting Pot, Pamela Smith
This “issues raising” seminar is intended to probe, in-depth, notions, theories and attitudes that inform our American perspective on national culture and ethnicity. It begins with the genesis of the notion, “melting pot,” as created by Israel Zangwill in his 1908 play, *The Melting Pot*. Of interest and concern are how the many theories developed from Zangwill's serious but idealistic notion have circumscribed the increasingly xenophobic responses to the realities of race relations and matters in America (as reflected in both the academy and in the everyday lives of the rank and file). What/who is/was American, then? Who/what is or is being allowed to be American? How will Frenchman de Creve Coeur or his fellow Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville characterize and define today what they respectively characterized as American freedom in the 18th century and democracy in the late 19th century? We will explore American writers’ perspectives on the immigrant experience in America and the integrationist-segregationist spectrum from the early twentieth century integrationist ideal of Zangwill to the oppositional, Eurocentric stance of the late 1980s and 1990s and our post-2012 election.

Issues, Trends and Innovations in Education, Saundra Shillingstad
This education colloquia synthesizes political, theoretical, social, economic (opportunity gap) and practical topics in a 21st century context. Students in this course will consider and become familiar with and conversant about various issues, trends and innovations of public education practice; students will learn more about their own educational background and where the field is going. Topics that hold relevance to the current state of education in the United States and abroad will be discussed based on expertise of special speakers and pertinent selected readings. Students will emerge better informed about public education and its many issues and ramifications. Education fuels the future for us all, so seize the opportunity to understand the directions education can take us.

Information Technology and Start-Ups, Sajda Qureshi
Mobile applications, web tools and an ever faster internet (and all our devices) bring many opportunities, especially for small businesses and start-ups. But only 20% of small businesses survive. What can be done to increase this number? Using electronic commerce tools and techniques can help start-ups to grow more than three times their initial size. In this colloquium, we will explore the needs in peoples’ lives that can be improved using electronic commerce. Students will learn about mobile applications, web 2.0 and 3.0 tools, and will develop business plans to improve people’s lives. No technological background is required, but a willingness to learn, experiment, and participate in service learning is. Bring the talents you have and join the effort and enterprise!
**FALL 2015**

**Free Expression and Social Media, Jeremy Lipschultz**

This course explores historical ideas about free speech, the First Amendment and international law, as well as policies and ethics, to understand current interest in social media. Through case studies and best practices, students will learn about successes and failures of communication within social network sites. Computer-mediated communication offers challenges and opportunities for learning about human behavior through core concepts of identity, interaction and community. By examining “big data” analysis techniques, privacy policies and media (journalism, PR, advertising and marketing) literacy, students will be empowered to use social media more effectively, cultivate a “personal brand,” and make meaningful professional network connections.

**Israel and Palestine, Dr. Moshe Gershovich**

It’s been in the news for six and a half decades, but what do you really know about long-standing disputes and ongoing concerns surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict? Amid continued violence and belligerent rhetoric, the Palestinian question remains uncertain. This course will outline the history of the conflict over Palestine/Israel, examine its present status, and explore its likely unfolding in the future. It seeks to provide a broad and concise understanding of the historical events which have shaped the relations between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as a keen awareness of the challenges and prospects related to their future. Students will contribute, via discussions and essays about historical documents, literature, and films, to an improved understanding of this conflict and potential outcomes.

**City of Omaha, Lucy Morrison**

How does a city work? This course asks students to engage in their own urban environment and explore some of the many facets that make Omaha the city it is. From the *Omaha World-Herald* to the Storm Chasers, the course will engage in experiential opportunities (so there will be required field trips on some Friday afternoons) that illuminate how the city beyond UNO came to be established, developed, and has grown and adjusted over the years. The course will consider sports, media, transport, and other layers to be determined, and students will be expected to develop and pursue their own lines of questioning in researching and documenting an area of interest within the city beyond those addressed in the course. Students will read from a variety of genres and sources as well as developing their own writing and researching practices. Journey through Omaha with fellow Honors students!
**SPRING 2015**

**Pursuit of the American Dream, Charles Johanningsmeier**
There are three main objectives to this course. First, it seeks to teach how the "American Dream"—a concept that pervades American culture—has been defined by a wide variety of writers, politicians, engineers, advertising executives, bankers, and others. Second, students will, I hope, learn to question how the concept has been deployed and see that many people throughout American history have sought to redefine the American Dream or challenge its validity. Finally, by the end of the course, students should have a greater appreciation and understanding not only of how others have interacted with the American Dream but also of how it affects their own lives.

**King Arthur Through the Ages, Lisabeth Buchelt**
Starting with Tennyson’s Idylls of the King (1859), this course follows Arthur through his many literary incarnations, until we reach the “historical” Arthur (c.1000). We consider the different aesthetic additions, subtractions, and changes made to this secular king of kings within the social and historical contexts of each reincarnation. We also view three Arthurian films with divergent artistic agendas: 1981’s Excalibur (John Boorman), 1991’s The Fisher King (Terry Gilliam) and 1975’s Monty Python and the Holy Grail (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones). Finally, we see a performance of the Broadway musical Camelot at the Orpheum. These, too, will be considered within their social and historical contexts: what do modern audiences look for in their versions of Arthur and the stories from the Arthurian corpus? Texts to be read include, but are not limited to, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s History of the Kings of Britain, Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte Darthur, Chrétien de Troyes’ Perceval, le Conte du Graal, The Marriage of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell, and several early Welsh poems. All texts are in translation, with guided reference to the original languages.

**Maverick Startups, Dale Eesley**
UNO’s Center for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Franchising is offering this course opportunity to Honors students! Do you want to start your own business? Would you like to work on a business development team? Apply to join this class and learn about business concepts and values as well as markets and resources you will need to have at your fingertips as you launch your venture in the world. You will need to complete an application and submit two letters of reference to apply; see maverickstartups.org for more information or contact Dr. Eesley at deesley@unomaha.edu. Apply early (class will be filled by rolling admission) and long before the December 1st deadline.