

Honors Seminars

Honor students are invited to participate in honors seminars. The seminars are interdisciplinary and are taught by faculty from a variety of disciplines. The specific structure of each seminar varies regarding meeting time, length of seminars, and number of class sessions. Successful completion of two honors seminars enables the student to fulfill part of the requirements for graduating in the honors program. See the Honors Program (<http://catalog.mtmercy.edu/archives/2018-19/academicpolicyinformation/#honorsprogramtext>) page for full list of requirements. Honors seminars do not count toward major, minor, or core curriculum credit.

Prerequisites for enrollment in any Honors Seminar:

1. The student must have at least sophomore standing (completed at least 30 credit hours)
2. The student must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00.

Courses

HO 204 Honors: Political System: Decision Making: 3 semester hours

This course will examine three specific historical moments that played a key role in the development of modern political systems. Students will conduct their examination by participating in a series of games designed to take them into each historical moment. The games combined research of primary texts with role playing in the classroom, so that students experience how ideological stances are translated into human actions and political structures within the context of historical circumstances. We will play three games from the *Reacting to the Past* series: *The Threshold of Democracy Athens in 403 B.C.*; *Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wanli Emperor*; and *Rousseau, Burke and Revolution in France*.

HO 216 Honors: The Holocaust: 3 semester hours

This course will examine the Holocaust and its impact on the history of the twentieth century. The approach will be interdisciplinary using historical, literary, cinematic, philosophical, and popular sources. To create a context for the specific study of this major event of the twentieth century, the course will include discussions about the phenomenon of Anti-Semitism in Western Culture, the specific events leading up to the Holocaust, the nature of the bureaucratic mass murder, the religious crisis caused by this event, and the continuing and profound effect of this tragedy.

HO 218 Honors: Social Power & Architecture: 3 semester hours

Within a historical context, this course addresses the role and function of spatial design and the built environment in shaping our lives, defining social class boundaries, and reinforcing economic, political and religious power bases in society. By critically examining various schools of modern architecture and urban planning and their rise and fall in conjunction with various stages of capitalist development, the role of commissioned artists, architects and planners in serving specific interests as well as alternative approaches to designing the built environment will be discussed. The course format is a combination of intensive class discussions of assigned readings, guest speakers, hands-on experience with architectural design using CAD software and conventional techniques, films/videos, and field trips to various local/regional sites of architectural significance.

HO 219 Honors: Intelligence In Non-Human Primates: 3 semester hours

Are humans unique? Are we truly superior to other primates? Are humans the only species that produce and understand language? This course is designed to examine evidence of intelligence in non-human primates. Species studied will include chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and humans. Major topics will include language acquisition, cooperation, tool use, mathematical reasoning, and other forms of intelligence including the evolution of consciousness. The course includes a three-day fieldtrip to the primate center in Madison, Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Zoo.

HO 235 Honors: City As Text: Sociology Of Cedar Rapids: 3 semester hours

This course will utilize field-based urban observation, presentations by city and community leaders, class discussion and critical analysis to help students comprehend the complexity of the city of Cedar Rapids as a "living social organism." Topics include the city's urban history and structure such as the social class boundaries, neighborhoods, land values and unequal distribution of urban services; Economic base including industries, service and retail activities, downtown business and shopping malls; political government and its functions; spatial distribution of schools; and various cultural and religious institutions that make Cedar Rapids "tick." There are no texts for this class in a conventional sense. Rather, students will be required to read packets of locally produced primary sources such as newspaper and online articles and reports, census data, and booklets produced by local companies and various urban agencies.

HO 238 World Cinema: The Major Directors: 3 semester hours

Students will study films by major directors from around the world. They will learn how to read a film, to analyze and interpret visual images. They will learn about film technique, including mise-en-scene, point of view, narrative, premise of adaptation, etc. Students will use film to interpret, reveal, and interrogate their cultural and historical contexts, especially by comparing American filmmakers with directors from other countries. Students will be expected to reserve 2-3 hours per week to view films outside of class. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing in the Honors program or permission of instructor.

HO 240 Medicine or Malarkey?: Healing traditions critiqued: 3 semester hours

Students will study health and wellness with a focus on critical analysis of topics. We will investigate Eastern and Western traditions of health as well as topics of contemporary concern. Students will explore how different traditions view "health" and "healing" and how the scientific method can be used to investigate and evaluate health-related topics. Participants in this class will be encouraged to re-evaluate their opinions and advice on promoting health in light of their literature research. In addition to class discussion, students will be required to write literature-based topic papers and prepare class presentations. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing in the Honors Program or permission of instructor.

HO 250 War and Peace, Death and Love in WWII: 3 semester hours

This course examines some of the contradictory, complex realities of the Second World War, which has been called "The Good War," "The People's War," "The Necessary War," and "The Inferno." The course looks at how the war deeply affected many different countries and many classes of people; how it raised abiding gender, non-violence, environmental, military, and just-war issues. This topic may be studied in a number of ways: through literature, cinema, memoirs, art, popular culture, etc. to objectify the total nature of this war. This version of the course will specifically examine films created during the war, in the immediate post-war years, and from the 1960's to the present. Finally, the course will not only look at combat; it will also address the challenges faced on the home fronts and the various anti-war challenges both during and after the war.

HO 257 The Economics and Culture of Food Distribution: 3 semester hours

This course will examine the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food with an emphasis on Cedar Rapids. We will study the food economy and how it affects its cost and price. The students will survey the environmental, cultural and health implications of modern food production and distribution systems and how these systems can evolve in the future. Students will be able to see the food economy from a social welfare as well as a business perspective. Prerequisite: junior standing in the honors program or permission of instructor.

HO 260 Honors: Evolutionary Psychology: 3 semester hours

The class is a seminar that investigates the fundamentals of evolutionary psychology, including issues of natural and sexual selection, adaptation, and domain-specific psychological mechanisms as they relate to human behaviors, cognition, and emotions. Reading and discussion will be the main format of the class.

HO 265 Altruism: 3 semester hours

Altruism can be defined as the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. While this concept is central to the Mission of Mount Mercy University, if, how, or why humans developed altruistic behavior still is debatable. This course will not answer the questions surrounding altruism, but, rather, we will explore different ideas and permit students to develop their own perspectives.

HO 310 Ethical and Social Implications of the Human Genome Project: 3 semester hours

This course is an exploration of the ethical, legal and social implications of the Human Genome Project. Students will acquire knowledge of the basics of genetics and an understanding of the role science plays in our society and the great potential scientific knowledge has to improve or harm life on our fragile planet. Students will reflect on the ethical implications of genetic research and on their role as citizens in determining governmental funding for and use of scientific knowledge. Students will understand the implications of genetics for our socially constructed concept of race. Students will be challenged to write on the following questions: What is considered acceptable diversity and who should decide that? Who owns and controls genetic information? How does genomic information affect members of minority communities and indigenous populations? Related to one's ethnic identity, how does personal genetic information affect an individual and society's perception of that individual? Do people's genes make them behave in a particular way? Who determines what behavior is "particular"?

HO 320 Media and Voters: 3 semester hours

This honors seminar will investigate the 2012 presidential election and how it and mass media interact. It will include ways in which public opinion is measured and shaped by media messages, and how news coverage of the election shapes perception of the race. This is a joint communication and political science course, and will include topics from both disciplines.

HO 330 Biological Anthropology: Human Evolution and Biocultural Adaptations in the Ancient and Modern World: 3 semester hours

This course introduces students to the field of biological anthropology. Biological anthropologists use information from both the social and physical sciences to gain a holistic understanding of humans as biocultural beings and investigate a broad range of subject matter including the biological origins of the human species, the range of human variation, and the impact cultural innovations can have on biological development in past and present environments. In this honors seminar, the topics discussed will include: human evolution and evolutionary theory, biological variation between and within populations, the biocultural impacts of activity and food production on human health and demography in the ancient world, and the positive and negative influences of technology, social structure, diet, and work activities on human health, reproduction and life expectancy in the contemporary world.

HO 450 Independent Research Project -- Honors: 3 semester hours

Qualified Honors Students may count up to 3 credits of independent research towards the honors credits needed to complete the Honors Program. Students should choose a faculty mentor in their major program to guide them in the design of a research project. Faculty member will oversee the student and provide mentorship through the duration of the student's independent research. The course may be taken as HO450: Honors Research or as an independent research course listed in the major program, appended with a .H honors designation. E.g. BI450.H.