

Honors Course Descriptions

Spring 2019

NKU  | HONORS

HNR 101-001: The Mind of the Villain

Rachel Zlatkin

MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m.

This course provides an introduction to the NKU Honors Program and the Honors style of learning. The seminar emphasizes collaborative learning, independent research, creative projects within a dialogical learning environment.

Our particular course makes a study of “the mind” and “the villain,” especially feelings of hatred and rage as they lead to violence. In this course, we study various literary and film depictions of the villain, contextualized by contemporaneous documentation of criminal behavior and theories on criminality and mental health. Together, we gather an appreciation of the **human** identified as a criminal or labeled villainous. This class also contains a social justice component: we learn about the relationship between human behavior and social conditions, and contemplate modes of personal and social intervention. Together, we will gather a more critical understanding of the villain, the criminal, and the social ramifications of human behavior. As we gather a deeper understanding of the complexity of our topic, students enter a question oriented toward a particular facet of the problem that is of special interest to them.

HNR 102-001: It’s the End of the World as We Know It

Rachel Zlatkin

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.

Why are we, as a culture, so drawn to a world-wide, fiery end? How does such a moment pose a hopeful beginning? This section of Honors 102, “It’s the End of the World as We Know It,” explores a range of apocalyptic literature and film. The Hebrew Bible’s *Daniel* and the NT *Revelation*, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* to Timothy LaHaye’s *Left Behind* book series, Joon-ho Bong’s *Snowpiercer* and Alex Garland’s *Annihilation*, are just a few examples, past to present, that show the wide range of political, cultural, and religious fascination with “the end” and “the beginning.”

As a class, we will consider what drives this fascination with the Alpha and the Omega. Together we consider a story’s message and audience, the historical and political context, as well as the possibilities and problems residing in the text’s reception today. We consider the text’s interpretation inside a variety of disciplines, while retaining this appreciation of a story’s rhetorical situation. We contemplate the fears and anxieties that manifest in any such apocalyptic moment.

The title of this course, however, is also a play on what we mean by “research.” We will make a conscious effort to consider how we ourselves construct knowledge and how we respond when we meet the end of that knowledge. For example, while it is clear that a thought or idea cannot, in and of itself, commit murder or inflict “the end,” a revelation fosters a cognitive shift that can only be understood as both a beginning and an ending in the scholar’s knowledge, a portal from one realm of understanding to the next. How we integrate that experience into our research process will be an open discussion throughout the semester. In so doing, the course is also meant to address the rupture that apocalyptic literature assumes inevitable.

HNR 102-002 & 003: Media, Performance, and Popular Culture

Ali Godel

002: TR 12:15-1:30 p.m.

003: W 6:15-9:00 p.m.

Popular culture is everyday culture. And, every day, we experience a technology-mediated world in which nearly everything we do is simultaneously “live” and recorded. We are always “on,” connecting with others on a global scale to consume, create, and re-create. From the movies we watch, to the concerts we attend—from the special occasions we celebrate, to the games we play—media and performance are cornerstones of our modern lives.

This course uses the interdisciplinary lenses of media and performance studies to explore complex issues and ideas in contemporary popular culture. We’ll consider concepts such as authenticity, identity, appropriation, copyright, technology, environmental impact, globalization, urbanity, celebrity, fandom, and the creator-audience relationship in time, place, and space. Texts will draw from multiple perspectives as we ask, “How do we shape popular culture and how does popular culture shape us?” In addition, students will bring topics of interest to the table and complete a self-directed research project.

HNR 102- 004 & 005: The Meaning of Life

Tonya Krouse

004: MWF 9:00am-9:50 a.m.

005: MWF 11:00am-11:50 a.m.

The fifteenth-century poet and orator George Herbert famously declared, "Living well is the best revenge." In the twenty-first century, somebody on the internet created the hashtag #lifegoals, a shorthand way to indicate our aspirations for a life well lived. Throughout history, people have been fascinated by trying to understand what life is and trying to articulate what gives life meaning. What does it mean to live well, or, even, what counts as "life"? From the Ancient Greeks to the present day, scholars, philosophers, scientists, technologists, and artists have pondered these questions. Not only have they considered life as it connects to humanity and ethics – such as in debates about abortion, gun control, and war – but also they have investigated life in the physical world, from the life of cells, to the smallest organisms, and to the life of our planet and the universe. Additionally, in the wake of the technological advancements of the twenty-first century, thinkers have explored the boundaries between the living world and the world that we make, with technologies like artificial intelligence, genetic modification of plants, or cloning. In HNR 102, drawing on texts from a range of disciplines spanning religion to computer science, students will evaluate the ways in which different disciplines seek to define the meaning of life. They will then build upon what they have learned to devise their own independent research projects.

HNR 301-001: The Invention of the Body

Rachel Zlatkin

MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m.

This course contemplates the body as an unstable text imagined and re-membered through creative experimentation and scientific inquiry: The fluid body changes over time due to the critical, scientific, creative, and cultural lenses employed in understanding (and creating) it. The course therefore considers the body's representation throughout history, and considers religious, medical, fictional, and visual representations of the body. Special attention is paid to the gendering, racialization, and classification of the body in an effort to create a cultural and historical context for how gender, race, and class are understood today.

Students are introduced to medical literature from classical Greek treatises to early modern medical treatises which predate the hospital and medical schools. Together we examine the shift from the midwife to the doctor, from the humoral theorist to the anatomist. The body is, thus, understood as a site of struggle for "the meaning of the human" body, as domestic healing remedies employed by wives and mothers give way to the controlled study of medicine and scientific inquiry.

Students complete an interdisciplinary research project by integrating class materials alongside their own research before crafting a "body" (of knowledge) of their own design.

HNR 302-001: Random Acts of Kindness

Ali Godel

MW 2:00-3:15 p.m.

"Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person."

"There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind." — Fred Rogers

This is a civic/community engagement course that focuses on the concepts of kindness, empathy, and "giving back." From individuals to institutions, we will discover the ways in which kindness can make a lasting impact on the daily lives of our neighbors, and ourselves. In the process, we will consider related ideas like conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, media/social media impacts, bullying, etc.

In the wake of national and local conversations about policies like family separations, homeless camp removals, sensitivity training, etc., exploring the potential benefits of acts of kindness in our communities is very timely.

Students will have the unique opportunity to participate in the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project. In collaboration with ArtsWave, students will become philanthropists, granting \$2,000 (real money!) to a community arts project in Northern Kentucky that makes an impact in one or more of the following areas: Bridge Cultural Divides, Enliven Neighborhoods, Fuel Creativity & Learning.

HNR 302-002: Haunted America: Trauma and Memory in the American Landscape

This course is cross-listed with HIS 394-004.

James Buss

TR 10:50am-12:05 p.m.

This course interrogates the intersection of history and memory as it relates to traumatic events in America's past: settler colonial violence, slavery, terrorism, etc. We will explore the ways in which American society has attempted to remember, forget, commemorate, and erase parts of its troubled past in order to make sense of its present. It takes seriously the voices of the dead as they speak to us in the present, whether captured in archives, voiced in the tales of literary authors, displayed on the walls of museums, or venerated in commemorative spaces. This class will explore the very meaning of history and its relationship to historical memory. What is the meaning of history? What is the purpose of studying the past? How does the past shape the present? Do all Americans interact with the past in the same way? Why or why not? In the end, this class seeks to push your understanding of how historical events and actions shape our sense of self and how our understanding of self shapes our comprehension of the past. Part of this class will include work with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, as well as a project involving local histories of race in downtown Newport, KY.

HNR 303-001: The Bloomsbury Group: Creative Communities

Tonya Krouse

TR 9:25-10:40 a.m.

The Bloomsbury Group, which began as a collection of friends living in the London neighborhood of Bloomsbury, came over the course of the first half of the twentieth century to symbolize the zeitgeist of modernity. The group's members – which included the economist John Maynard Keynes, the novelists Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster, the critics Clive Bell, Roger Fry, and Lytton Strachey, the artists Vanessa Bell, Dora Carrington, and Duncan Grant, and the political theorist Leonard Woolf – became known as some of the most influential thinkers, authors, and artists of their time. More than that, the group became famous for its rejection of conservative Victorian values in favor of sexual experimentation, political radicalism, and commitment to the aesthetics of everyday life. In this course, we will engage with the multifaceted contributions of the Bloomsbury group in order to understand their profound impact on twentieth-century culture. Further, we will consider the model for community that the Bloomsbury Group endorses, and we will explore its relevance – or lack thereof – for the ways in which we imagine community in twenty-first-century life. Students will conclude the course with a creative, applied, or research project connected to the course theme. Students who excel in the course may also have the opportunity to participate in the International Virginia Woolf Conference, which will take place at Mount St. Joseph University in June 2019.

HNR 303-003: Emily Dickinson and the Arts

Could count for ENG credit. See English Department chair for approval.

Bob Wallace

TR 10:50-12:05 p.m.

Emily Dickinson is now recognized as one of the greatest poets in the English language. Her poems have inspired a remarkable body of work by visual artists and composers, many of them alive today. Our primary literary text will be Dickinson's *Complete Poems*, supplemented by other resources in print and on the web. Our primary text for visual art will be *Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art*. Our study of music inspired by Dickinson will range from songs composed by Aaron Copland in 1950 to those composed by Jake Heggie in 2015. Our third text will be *I Took My Power in My Hand: NKU Students Create Emily Dickinson Art*, the catalog for the 2015 exhibition featuring artwork created by students in our own English and Honors classes between 1998 and 2014.

For the individual projects at the end of the semester, students will have the option of writing a research paper or creating your own artistic response to Dickinson in the medium of your choice. Earlier assignments will include an essay exam, a paper, journal entries, and class presentations.

HNR 302-003: Sustainability

Kimberly Weir

TR 1:40-2:55 p.m.

If you're curious about food production, water usage, what to do with all that garbage, how and where stuff gets grown and made, and whether or not what politicians, the news, and social media say about sustainability is even remotely true, then this is the class for you. You'll see where you, as a local consumer, fit into the global system we live in by visiting some places that have direct connections with growers, artisans, and resource management. The short paper assignments and project for this class will help you get a better understanding of the complexities of sustainability issues, as well as how you affect and are affected by what goes on in the world.

HNR 306-001: Feminist Punk Rock and Women's Protest Music

John Alberti

TR 1:40-2:55 p.m.

In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, Rita Felski argues that feminist theorists need to pay "serious attention . . . to the political potential of more popular forms such as . . . rock music." For twenty five years, one source of that political potential has been the emergence of a vital feminist cultural scene within punk and alternative rock music, including the Riot Grrrl movement, singer/songwriters like Ani DiFranco, and musicians as diverse as PJ Harvey, Lady GaGa, MIA, Amanda Palmer, Regina Spektor, Pussy Riot, Courtney Barnett, and others. In this class, we will use a cultural studies approach to explore the music, art, criticism, and social activism of contemporary feminist rock music within the larger historical context of feminist protest music, including Madonna and Beyoncé.

HNR 395-001: Netherlands: Space, Place, and Identity

This course is cross-listed with PRE 495-001.

Belle Zembrodt and Greg De Blasio

W 3:25-4:40 p.m.

In this course with a study abroad requirement, students will explore the impact of place on issues of culture, tradition, and innovation. Students will study natural space (public space), man-made place (art, architecture, neighborhoods, digital space), attitudes and behaviors (food, business, philosophy, religion, public transportation). Students will develop understanding of how the chosen cities took the form they did and how they function today. During the spring semester 2019 students will discuss readings and use the pedagogy of Place as Text to understand local communities. We will meet on Wednesdays from 3:25-4:40. In May (12-24) students will travel together to study communities in the Netherlands. We will travel to Amsterdam, Rotterdam and other locations representing the medieval to the modern. Although urban life in the region pre-dates the digital area by centuries, we will explore how they provide the means to experience cutting-edge equipment for living today. Upon return, students will reflect on how the expression of culture through place shapes social values and individual identity.

Students who wish to enroll in this course must apply with the Office of Education Abroad by December 3 with a \$500.00 nonrefundable deposit and a copy of their passport (or proof that they have applied for the passport).

NKU students may apply for scholarships through the Office of Education Abroad as well as the Honors College. Registration for the course is limited to those who have submitted an application for the study abroad requirement through the Office of Education Abroad on a first come, first served basis.