

HONORS COURSE DESCRIPTIONS – FALL 2024

Ancient Legacies

Fall 2024 – Rick McDonald

Ancient Legacies HONR 2000 Section 001 and Section 002

ABOUT THIS COURSE

This Course will read a variety of heroic stories from antiquity (Greek, Roman, Indian), and European Medieval and Renaissance literature (English, French, Italian). The books we will be reading are more than “Classics”; the people who wrote “the Classics” read and often revered the works you will be studying. These texts have had a broad impact on literature and thought in the western world. There are many works which are their equal in artistry, but these works constitute some of the most influential literature ever created. They were enjoyed and respected by their contemporary audiences and their effects are often just as strong today. Every work we are reading will be a translation of a great work from another (often ancient) culture. Changes from one language to another and one culture to another sometimes require greater concentration on our part, but you will find that most of what these works have to say is still interesting in our day and easily applicable to segments of our world.

When you complete this class you will be that much more an educated individual. You will have participated in a reading process that began by at least 19 B.C.E in the Western world and which has been observed through the Renaissance and quite obviously up until today. The world changes and what is important sometimes does as well, but the issues important to the contemporary audiences of these works are not that far removed from our own interests: War, love, inhumanity, suffering, faith, honor, compassion, fairness, equality, power, damnation, redemption, and salvation.

Fall 2024 – Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer

Ancient Legacies HONR 2000 Section X01 and Section X02

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Our topic this semester is the history of ideas of order in the Western world—cosmological, religious, philosophical, social, political, economic, artistic, and scientific—from antiquity through 1500. Our journey will take us from the beginnings of civilization in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia all the way to the High Italian Renaissance of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Along the way, we will study many foundational written and visual texts, from the Egyptian Book of the Dead to Dante’s Inferno and from the pyramids to the Sistine Chapel. Our emphasis will lie on written texts—literature, recorded mythology, histories, sacred texts, and philosophy—but we

will also study what objects, buildings, paintings, sculptures, ritual practices, and performance spaces can tell us about the history of ideas of order, and disorder. Cosmological and scientific ideas of order (and disorder) we will encounter include the creation and the final destruction of the world; the cycle of life and immortality; the order of the heavenly bodies and the natural elements; fate and will; atoms, numbers, and other first principles; matter and form; body and spirit; flux and stasis; the temporal and the eternal; oneness, duality, and many-ness; hierarchy and circularity; the Ptolemaic universe, the Aristotelian universe, the Scholastic universe, and the great chain of being. Religious ideas of order we will encounter include animism; natural and female divinity; the afterlife and the underworld; polytheism and monotheism; covenants and chosen people; ethical codes and guilt; sin, love, and sacrament; heaven and hell; salvation and Last Judgment.

Philosophical ideas of order we will encounter include those that derive from monism, dualism, idealism, empiricism, the Presocratic, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Cynicism, Neoplatonism and early Christian philosophy, Scholasticism, and Humanism.

Social, political, and economic ideas of order we will study include nomadism, agriculture, and civilization; written law and legal canons; city states, kingship, and empire; social hierarchy and patriarchy; division of labor and trade; excellence and heroism; territory and dispersion; cultural identity and diversity; democracy and republicanism; feudalism, the mercantile system, and early capitalism; administrative, academic, and church institutions; notions of infidels and holy war; the authority of the church; secularization; and political realism.

Artistic ideas of order we will study include stylization; monumentalism; classicism; myth, epic, and drama; unity and catharsis; symbolism; iconoclasm; naturalism; idealization; and realism.

Fall 2024 – Michael Goode

Ancient Legacies HONR 2000 Section 003

ABOUT THIS COURSE

This course will explore what peace means in relationship to violence in early modern colonial America, using the history of Pennsylvania's colonization (ca. 1680s-1760s) as a special focus. Topics will include religious toleration, warfare, slavery and abolition, colonization, and indigenous perspectives on peace. This is an interdisciplinary course that will approach the problem of peace and violence from historical and peace studies perspectives.

Modern Legacies

Fall 2024 – Elyse Vaccaro

Modern Legacies HONR 2100 Section 002

The History of the Body: Theory of Human Anatomy and Physiology

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Our understanding of the human body is shaped by historical and cultural perspectives. Outdated theories still influence our views of what is considered “normal.” In this course, we explore the historical theory of human anatomy and physiology, how this affects how we portray and treat the body, and its legacy in the current day.

In particular, we will: 1) explore the historical use and misuse of human bodies in scientific and medical research, 2) examine the representation of the body in art and coverage of the body in textbooks, and 3) survey how academic training affects the attitudes, beliefs, and practice of healthcare providers.

Fall 2024 – Robert Carney

Modern Legacies HONR 2100 Section 001 and Section 004

ABOUT THIS COURSE

“Do you think, then, that we should attempt such a survey? For it is, I assure you, too big a task to undertake without thought.”

“‘We know what we are in for,’ returned Adeimantus, ‘go on.’” (58)

—Plato, *The Republic*

The questions raised by Plato are some that we will pursue all semester. They’re foundational. The States and possible futures built on that foundation are too many to list, so we’ll focus on a few renowned and lesser-known works in the dystopian genre and ask, “Futuristic fiction: paranoia or prophecy?” This is fun, of course, but not as easy as it sounds. There’s a lot of academic attention paid to these works, and many scholars liken dystopian authors to Old Testament prophets speaking out in the predominant form of our age. Another way to think of it is this: These fictive works are philosophy and social critique done as demonstration rather than discussion. We’ll be doing a little bit of both as we interpret novels, short-stories, philosophy, and film and do some discussing, group presenting, and writing.

Fall 2024 – Ross Hagen

Modern Legacies HONR 2100 Section 005 and Section 006

“The Powers of Horror”

ABOUT THIS COURSE

This seminar takes its title from Julia Kristeva's philosophical book on horror's ability to explore realms in which conventional forms of identity, morality, and social order are disturbed or cast off, exposing the taboo parts of our societies and ourselves. Through an exploration of literature, visual art, film, and music from around the globe, we will be confronted with elemental disturbances of time, space, and self. However, we will also find that the otherworldly, grotesque, and weird often holds a mirror to real-world anxieties and traumas. The seminar will include discussions of works by Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, H.P. Lovecraft, Anne Sexton, Junji Ito, and many others.

Fall 2024 – Tiffany Nez

Modern Legacies HONR 2100 Section X01 (Online)

ABOUT THIS COURSE

In this class, we would like to understand and reimagine a discussion about the American Indian experience, both as history and as current topics. But our approach won't focus on a pinned and preserved subject already on display; neither will it attempt to clear the ledgers or balance the books on historical debts and cultural trauma. We will consider the subject through a variety of disciplines: narrative, history, art, philosophy, religion, and science. I would like to encourage you as students to draw from your own backgrounds and fields of study to relate to the subjects in unique ways and facilitate discussions that explore the ongoing reality of this cultural exchange. We will read Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alexie Sherman, N. Scott Momaday, David Grann.

Fall 2024 – Cassie Bingham

Modern Legacies HONR 2100

Evolutions of justice: human attempts to repair harm

ABOUT THIS COURSE

The phrase "justice is blind" is misleading in a society where the concept of justice is hotly debated, and the way we define and address harm is highly subjective. Our day-to-day lives include discourse around phenomena such as "cancel culture," and whether it is an ethical approach to justice. In this course, we'll explore definitions and policies of justice over time, who and what we perceive as deserving of correction, and various theories about how communities decide when justice is "served." The course will focus on three common forms of justice: punitive, restorative, and transformative. Students will be challenged to analyze various philosophical underpinnings for what it means to reduce and repair wrongdoing, and dive into case studies that exemplify diverse approaches to defining and pursuing justice globally.