



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Honors College

Course Descriptions Fall 2024

Honors College Fall 2024 course descriptions packet includes:

- 1) **Honors 210G** Intermediate Seminars for **Fall 2024** (starting on this page)
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Fall 2024 Honors College 200-level Courses

Honors 210G (1): "The Personal Is Political": Reproductive Justice on Film (#9961)

TuTh 12:30 - 1:45pm

Carney Maley, Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies

The reproductive justice movement was developed by a group of Black women activists in the 1990s as a way to merge their advocacy for both reproductive rights and social justice issues. Using this intersectional framework, we will examine how ideas about reproduction have evolved in the U.S. from pre-*Roe vs. Wade* to the overturning of the Supreme Court case in 2022, to today. Reproductive Justice allows us to explore not only the evolution of abortion rights, but also the right for people to have children and to parent them in a safe environment. Therefore, we will investigate topics such as maternal healthcare, adoption, LGBTQ+ family building, new reproductive technologies, sterilization, and contraception. Students will read the works of legal scholars, activists, historians, and journalists to chart how people's reproductive decisions are shaped not only by gender identity but also race, socioeconomic class, and sexuality.

The course will also focus on how issues of reproductive justice are represented in contemporary American film. Analyzing both narrative and documentary films from the 21st century can provide important insights into how society views certain reproductive choices (i.e. what is considered acceptable, legal, desirable, etc.), and how these individual and structural decisions change over time. Assignments will include written analyses of contemporary documentary and narrative films and a final research project that investigates a current activist organization committed to one of the reproductive justice issues covered in the course.

This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) requirement.

Honors 210G (2): Mutagens and Carcinogens (#9962)

TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm

Steve Ackerman, Honors College

PLEASE NOTE: *Students who've already taken Mutagens and Carcinogens as HONORS 101 in a previous semester cannot register for this HONORS 210G section.*

This course is for non-science *and* science majors to explore a variety of mutagens and carcinogens. Mutagens and carcinogens are chemicals, ultraviolet (UV) rays, radiation, etc., that can cause changes to how the genetic material is expressed. In these discussions, we will evaluate the methodology of the research and the data presented, in order to determine if the conclusions are warranted and reliable. The course will begin with a non-technical discussion of how DNA damage occurs by addressing what a mutation is and the different classes of mutations. We will discuss how mutations can arise without changing the DNA sequence ("epigenetic changes") and how these changes can be passed on to subsequent generations even though the DNA remains conserved (transgenerational). We will discuss the Lenski experiments that are elucidating how populations change via natural mutations and confer advantages to select members of the population.

We will also consider the health dangers of plastic water bottles, canned and plastic enclosed foods, the components of plastic such as bisphenol A ("BPA" - BPA-free is *not* BPA free) and phthalates (endocrine disruptors), triclosan in antibacterial products, sunscreens, etc. We will also debunk the supposed harmful effects of high-fructose corn syrup. Finally, we will discuss why chemotherapy uses mutagens and carcinogens for a good purpose (i.e. cancer treatment) although they are harmful, as well as why some current disease genes may have once been beneficial. Students will write three short impact/response papers (2 pages each), one medium essay (3 pages) and one longer research paper (5 pages), and students will also give an oral presentation. The 3-page and 5-page papers will be on topics chosen by the student and should reflect their interests.

This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) requirement.

Honors 291 (1): Literature & Biopolitics (#2849)**MWF 1:00 - 1:50pm*****Avak Hasratian, English***

Life is resilient and depends on eco-biological and synthetic resources. “Biopolitics” describes how institutions and the people who run them on planetary levels treat human beings as populations rather than as sovereign, rights-bearing, dignified individuals. Between the two is where “biopolitics” operates.

This is not always negative. Biopower retreats from death and advances life: “[W]e may be living in the most peaceable era in our species’ existence.... 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 Has Declined*, xxi). At no time in history have as many humans been lived better lives free from the threat of violent death. But at what cost must we be *made* to live, and by whose terms?

Art picks up on these ideas and asks us: What are the limits of life beyond kin, nation, even species? Is there more to life than survival? Why does art imagine destruction? Does art pose these questions to religion and science, or do religion and science pose these questions to art? Can art talk with other disciplines to enrich life? Art turns against the forces of dehumanization. Imagining apocalypses is preferable to experiencing them! Fiction and films show us we are both selfish and noble, awful and beautiful, violent and peaceful, and can help us to improve *real* life. Assignments include short response papers, group presentations, and mid-length comparative papers.

This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.

Honors 291 (2): Social Call/Artistic Response: Performance in a Changing World (#9965)**TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm*****Sofia Lindgren Galloway, Honors College***

Artists have been moved to use their craft to respond to social events and movements for thousands of years, sometimes shifting societies and ways of making art. This class will focus on the recent history and current state of theatre and performance as it relates to social problems and politics. Students will engage with theatre history and theory, applied theatre practices, and envision their own artistic responses to the world we live in.

In this course, we will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How is performance shaped by society?
- How is society shaped by performance?
- How can we use performance as a tool for social change?

The class will be taught using drama and applied theatre methods, so students should come ready to play (no acting experience required)! Homework will consist of articles, book chapters, and reading or watching recordings of plays. Students will be assessed through two written assignments (3 to 6 pages each), class participation, and a creative final presentation.

This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.

Honors 292 (1): Spiritual, Not Religious: Secularism and Spirituality in America (#2850)**TuTh 8:00 - 9:15am*****Michael Motia, Classics and Religious Studies***

In 2000, only about 5% of Americans said they had no religious affiliation. Today, that number is about 35%. Demographers predict it will be more than half the country soon. And yet, only about 5% of Americans are currently atheists. Most of the “nones” believe in some higher power; nearly all of them also have some set of practices that ground them and put them in touch with that higher power.

Americans might not go to church or call themselves religious as often, but they’re not done with religion or spirituality or transcendence. They’re improvising and trying to find new “remixed” ways of finding meaning, purpose, ritual, and

community. This class tracks how this incredibly fast shift in American life happened. What does America's present religious landscape look like today? Then we will work backwards to understand, as Talal Asad put it, "the contingencies that have come together to give us our certainties."

How did institutional religion become so optional? Where do people find community? Where do they find meaning? What moral and ethical guidelines govern their lives? How do they learn what matters? How do they develop rituals? Those questions had been the realm of religion. Are they now? Through reading ethnographies, watching films, writing papers, and in-class presentations, students will grapple with contemporary spiritual and religious America.

This course fulfills a Humanities (HU) distribution requirement.

Honors 292 (2): United States Foreign Policy since 1900 (#3365)

TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm

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 (3): Introduction to Marxist Economic Analysis: Capital and Class (#9966)

Friday 8:00 - 10:45am

Charalampos Konstantinidis, Economics

What is class? What is exploitation? This course introduces students to Marxian economic analysis, which provides a critical understanding of capitalism. Over the course of the semester, we will study the struggle between capitalists and workers, the competition between different types of capitalists, as well as the relation between capitalism and social reproduction.

Students will be assessed through weekly 1-page quizzes, three longer in-class exams, and engagement in class discussions.

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): World Cultures through the Lens of Digital Photography (#2853)

(PLEASE NOTE: This course will be offered REMOTE via synchronous instruction)

TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm

Mary Oleskiewicz, Performing Arts

In this fun, creative, and hands-on course, students will learn the fundamentals of photography, including photographic composition, essentials of digital editing, and visual storytelling. We will focus our collective lenses on the richness of world

cultures in the Greater Boston area using cell phone cameras, DSLRs, or mirrorless cameras. Choice of camera is the student's preference (cameras will not be provided). In addition to developing a good eye, students will learn the ins-and-outs of preparing a final image for printing. We will learn from photos of great photographers, and collectively view and discuss student photos during zoom meetings.

Each student will attend and photograph at least one cultural event of their choice during the semester and keep a class photo journal. After a period of photographic exploration in the field, each student will shoot and assemble a digital portfolio on some aspect of a particular culture (people, food, music, architecture, ritual, etc). In addition, each student will select one photo to be enlarged, professionally printed, framed and matted (students will not bear this cost). We anticipate that the printed photos will be shown on campus in a special class exhibit near semester's end. There will be no final paper or exams. Students may be asked to write a descriptive or personal, philosophical introduction to their digital portfolio. No prior knowledge of photography is required. Each student will be guided to improve from their current level. Final grades will be based on an individual student's improvement, effort, growth, and willingness to take artistic risks with the subject matter.

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

Honors 294 (2): Transnational Crime and Global Networks (#2854)

TuTh 12:30 - 1:45pm

Chris Langevin, Global Governance & Human Security

This course will examine the flexible, fast-moving world of transnational crime, the wide range of commodities and criminal networks it touches, and its impact on ecosystems, economies, human security, and much more. Who governs transnational crime, and how do actors behave when an issue crosses national borders? Throughout the semester students will gain a broad understanding of international legal authorities who respond to transnational crime, as well as actors typically involved in transnational criminal activity, differentiating between domestic crime, international crime, and transnational crime.

We will explore multiple perspectives on transnational crime, including those aligned with state-led enforcement, ethical grey areas, socioeconomic factors affecting transnational criminal activities, victims of transnational crime, and unintended consequences of anti-transnational crime efforts from states and other actors. Readings and assignments will be based on a mixture of news articles and scholarly sources, including reading international legal documents (e.g. United Nations convention documents). Students will be assessed through several short-written assignments, and a final project based on an in-depth exploration of a particular example of transnational crime of the student's choosing, using concepts and approaches discussed in the course.

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): Human Origins (#9969)

TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm

Steven Ackerman, Honors College

This course will address the adventure of becoming human. This knowledge is continually improving as new fossils are discovered and hypotheses change. As new information is published, together we will discuss it. We'll briefly discuss the various hypotheses for how the universe formed (the Big Bang is one of eight hypotheses) and the myriad hypotheses for how life began on Earth. We'll discuss what evolution means and how it progresses via mutations. The first apes are believed to have originated in Asia. We will follow their descendants in Africa who become *Propliopithecus* (includes *Aegyptopithecus*) (~30 million years ago) who morph into *Pliopithecus* (~20 million years ago) who become *Dryopithecus* (12-11 million years ago). A gap exists until ~7 million years ago when *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* (Chad, Africa) appears in the fossil record and very recently *Lufengpithecus* (China) dated to the same age. Even though they appear in disparate regions, both are postulated to be the first apes on the human line and walked partially upright. A fossil *Orrorin* (~6 million years ago) controversially may be our next ancestor. They morph into *Ardipithecus* (~5 million years ago), then *Australopithecus* (4-1 million years ago), then early *Homo* (*Homo habilis*, ~3-1 million years ago) to later *Homo erectus* (~2-0.5 million years ago) to archaic *Homo* (e.g.; *Homo heidelbergensis* and other *Homo* species) to modern humans. *Homo erectus* was the first to leave Africa, multiple times, starting maybe 2 million years ago. *Homo erectus* or a later form of

Homo gave rise to the ancestor of our sister species *Neandertals* (Europe) and *Denisovans* (Siberia). Archaic humans also left Africa, multiple times, starting as early as 100,000 years ago and entered Europe at least 70,000 years ago. While there we reproduced with *Neandertals* and in Asia with *Denisovans*. Our genomes contain *Neandertal* DNA and oceanic genomes contain *Neandertal* and *Denisovan* DNA. Our genomes are the product of at least 30-40 million years of intermixing different geographic groups. We will discuss many migrations that began with agriculture (~8,000 years ago), mixing human genomes from multiple geographic locales. We will also discuss cultural technologies that locales brought elsewhere.

Students will have six written assignments (3 short research papers, 3 short responses), and an oral class presentation.

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

Honors 295 (2): Introduction to Genomic Data Science (#14256)

TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm

Brook Moyers, Biology

Kourosh Zarringhalam, Mathematics

Biological and medical research increasingly involves genome sequencing for discovery and application. In this course, students will learn how to analyze these data through hands-on bioinformatics activities with a focus on cancer research. Students will interact closely with the instructors and work in small groups on weekly projects, starting with genomic sequence data and ending with biological interpretation. In parallel, students will develop an individual genomic data science project culminating in a final presentation.

Specific topics include: the central dogma of biology (DNA --> RNA --> protein), working on powerful remote computer servers, sequence alignment algorithms (to compare DNA sequences between different cells or organisms), quantifying differential gene expression (which genes are activated in different cell and tissue types); regression, clustering, and classification models for genetic stratification (to be confident about how specific mutations are related to specific traits), and interpreting these analyses for biological meaning. No previous experience is required, and we welcome students from any background who would like to learn these skills in a supportive, interactive class.

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

Fall 2024 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): Anarchism and Order (#1500)

TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm

Todd Drogy, English

When One hears the word anarchy, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Disorder? Rebellion? Destruction? Chaos? Or freedom? Gaiety? Spontaneity? Resistance?

In *Anarchism and Order* we will explore the philosophy/practice of anarchism, both as a socio-economic critique and evolving expression of culture. We will trace the origins of anarchism, exploring its permutations through modern history and into the present. We will interest ourselves in the idea of *the human*, asking what it means to be *free*, what it means to be *equal*, and what it means to live in mutuality and reciprocity with others.

We will engage with multiple texts: essays, pamphlets, fiction, film, and music. Additionally, we will read chapters from Peter Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. Our objective is to explore how anarchism has shaped and continues to shape the world around us. More specifically, we will consider how anarchistic thought and practice have impacted the following movements: abolitionism, labor, land reform, feminism, civil rights, the anti-war movement, LGBTQ rights, educational reform, and environmentalism. The complex relationship between anarchism and technology will also be explored.

This is a discussion-focused class, with a strong emphasis on class participation. Students will compose three (500-600 word) mini-essays on readings/films/discussions. You will also keep a journal of reflective, informal writing. A thesis-driven research paper (12-14 pages) will be due at the semester's end.

Honors 380 (2): Thinking about Climate Change: Science, Literature, and Action (#2848)

Wednesday 1:00 - 3:45pm

Reinmar Seidler, Biology

Climate change is the biggest challenge of the 21st century. The issue has just begun to figure a bit more prominently in the US media and public discourse, yet many of us are still 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 – 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, student presentations, group collaborative work, and a major individual research paper in which each student will analyze and report on a proposed solution to anthropogenic climate distortion.

Honors 380 (3): Learning Biology through Reading Creative Non-fiction (#4203)

TuTh 9:30 - 10:45am

Megan Rokop, Honors College

PLEASE NOTE: *Students who've already taken Learning Biology through Reading Fiction & Non-fiction as HONORS 210G in a previous semester cannot register for this HONORS 380 section.*

This course is designed to be an introduction to many current and relevant topics in biology, medicine, and public health. These topics will be introduced and discussed as they come up in popular and highly regarded books written for non-scientists, including works of creative non-fiction such as memoirs. In this course, we will use the reading of several books (mainly memoirs), in order to guide our learning of topics in biology, medicine, and public health. Possible books might include: *Saving Gotham*, *Plant Hunter*, *Cured*, *Perfect Predator*, *Epic Measures*, *In Pain*, and *Superbugs*.

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:** Human subjects research, 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, funding and patenting scientific discoveries such as new medicines
- **Public health:** Treatment and prevention strategies in the US & around the world

This course will **not** involve textbook readings, exams, 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
- 10 short (300-word) writing assignments relating to books read in the course
- One paper (4,000-4,500 words) on a topic of your choice relating to one of the books
- A 10-minute oral presentation on a topic of your choice relating to one of the books