Honors Seminars Fall 2013

HONR 159 Monsters, from Folklore to Reality - In this course, we'll examine the influence of religion, culture, and science on monsters throughout history. We’ll also look at how we respond to the presence of monsters, whether in the form of actual large predators (e.g., sharks) or other frighteningly powerful creatures stemming from folklore or reality. Current controversial monster-related topics such as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence (The Terminator) & invasive species will be analyzed, using movies (Jaws, Outbreak, Frankenstei

HONR 161 The Doctor in the Police Box - The entire universe--all of time and all of space--where do you want to go? In this seminar we will examine the 50-year history of Doctor Who. We’ll look at how the TARDIS works, both as a time machine and a space ship; the companions over the years, and how they have changed over time; and the aliens and other opponents the Doctor has faced; as well as topics such as mythological influences and gender. Weekly assignments will include watching an episode or two and some reading. The final project will be to present "what if" scenario-- a particular time and a place to visit, what goes wrong, and how the Doctor fixes it.

HONR 157 Critical Thinking - This course strives to develop the ability to think critically and solve problems effectively. Course activities will include: lectures/discussions, team work and project. This will be a highly interactive class with an emphasis on intellectual growth and problem solving. We live in a society that mass-produces information. The key challenge in an information age is to know how to judge the quality of the information, opinions, and arguments that we are exposed to on a daily basis. We are often presented with information from a variety of sources. We must know how to make good judgments about people, information, and arguments. We also have to know how to present persuasive arguments. The learning outcome we strive for is to enhance students’ ability to think critically and solve problems effectively, which is essential for an intellectual life.

HONR 149 The Aliens Did It? - Throughout human history, humans have accomplished a number of monumental physical or intellectual achievements. There are some theories that these achievements, for example: the great pyramids; the creation of Stonehenge; the Nazca lines; the understanding of the stars; and even religion (just to name a few) all have their origins in interstellar travelers influencing or assisting early humans. This course will, primarily using the history channel show Ancient Aliens investigate the science and non-sense of these theories.

HONR 135 Wiseguys, Whackos and Whiners - This course is based on the assumption that some of those who are widely considered lunatics, ranters or doomsayers actually have quite interesting things to say about the way society works. Drawing from an assortment of controversial short essays, indy films, and internet websites, we’ll explore a wide variety of impassioned riffs – from third-wave feminism, queer theory, and radical environmentalism to race nationalism, revolutionary anarchism and religious fundamentalism. Each week we’ll be asking the same basic question: are these people hopeless nutcases, quirky visionaries, or what?!

HONR 131 Drinking up: The Science and History of Alcohol - Medicinally, as a source of nutrients, in worship and religion, and as a social lubricant, alcohol (ethanol) has been used by people from the earliest times to present. It was likely a fortuitous accident tens of thousands of years ago that it came into human culture, and while abused by a minority of drinkers, most derive pleasure from its consumption. In this course, the history and science of ethanol will be examined.

HONR 174 Mysteries of the Brain - This course will explore some of the truly amazing ways that behavior and mental processes are affected by abnormal brain development and brain injury. Through readings, discussions, videos, and brief response papers, we will focus on some fascinating case histories of individuals with unusual abilities and disabilities. We will also investigate the biological bases of gender differences. Books we will be using include The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Brain Sex, and As Nature Made Him: the Boy Who was Raised as a Girl.