THE HONORS SEMINARS SPRING 2015

Below you will find the Honors Seminars being offered Spring 2015. In addition to the course number and section, you will also find the honors and pathway requirements that the course satisfies. Please contact the Honors Director, Dr. James Snyder, at james.snyder@marist.edu if you have any questions.

WOMEN AND ART
HONR 340L111 and 381L111
Honors: Global Engagement; Expression and Creativity
Core: Fine Art
Pathway: Gender Studies
Dr. Anne Bertrand
M 11-12:15, W 9:30-10:45

This seminar will begin by examining the careers of the most productive and influential women painters working in Europe from the 16th century to the late 17th century. We will analyze the professional position of these artists and the ways in which they overcame the conditions of their gender, the economics of art production and contemporary cultural contexts. Then, we will look at depictions of women by both male and female painters to see whether they reveal different and gender-based attitudes in their art. We will pay special attention to images of Biblical and historical heroines, goddesses, female saints, housewives, gypsies and prostitutes.

HARRY POTTER AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE
HONR 320.111 and 380.111
Honors: Art of Culture; Expression and Creativity
Core: Literature
Pathway: Contemporary European Studies
Dr. Eileen Curley
T/F 2:00-3:15

J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series is a global popular culture phenomenon. While the novels are clearly rooted in western literary traditions, they also reveal the influence of the dismantling of the British Empire on contemporary society and culture. We will explore the cultural spread and influences on Harry Potter while interrogating how the novels present and represent elements of British culture and history, including British foundation myths, the British Empire, World War II, and contemporary UK government and society. Readings will include literary, critical, theoretical and historical materials that can help us to understand how Rowling is adapting these traditions and grounding her story in a post-colonial world for a contemporary audience.

While we will be referring to the books extensively throughout the semester, and while we will be re-reading portions of them, the focus of this course is on the literary, historical, cultural and social traditions that Rowling incorporates in her novels. Accordingly, students are expected to enter the course with a solid familiarity with the entire seven-book Harry Potter
series to enable us to spend the semester having lively discussions about the intersections between the assigned course readings and the novels. In order for this approach to work, students must keep up with the daily readings, actively look for connections between those readings the novels, and come to class ready to discuss and analyze those links. We will go further than simply drawing connections between Dobby and British India or the Triwizard Cup and the Holy Grail; we will look at the history and development of particular traditions and then explore how and why Rowling chooses to incorporate and alter them for her fictional world and the actual world of her readers. Interested students who have never read the series should start reading now... you’ll have time to finish them all before the start of the spring semester.

EDITH WHARTON IN THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY
HONR 331L111 and 380L112
Honors: Hudson Valley Studies; Expression and Creativity
Core: Literature
Pathway: American Studies, Gender Studies, HRV Studies
Dr. Judith Saunders
T/R 11:00-12:15

Edith Wharton is one of the most illustrious writers associated with the Hudson River Valley. She utilizes its landscapes and architecture in many of her fictional works, integrating regional settings with plot, theme, and character. In this seminar we will read a good sampling of Wharton’s novels, novellas, and short stories. In addition to examining her fiction from a literary standpoint, we will try to place it in its cultural-historical context, considering it in light of social changes taking shape in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Special emphasis will fall on Wharton’s exploration of tensions between society and the individual—tensions originating in cultural values, societal regulations, prescribed roles, or gender issues. Tentative reading list: The House of Mirth, The Age of Innocence, Hudson River Bracketed, Summer, Ethan Frome, New Year’s Day, The Old Maid, “Autres Temps,” “Roman, Fever,” “Xingu.” If there is sufficient interest, we will take a field trip to Wharton’s home in Lennox, Massachusetts.

THE ETHICS OF FOOD
HONR 200.111 and 365.111
Honors: Ethics; Philosophical and Moral Foundations
Core: Ethics
Pathway: Environmental Studies, Public Health
Dr. Joseph Campisi
T/R 3:30-4:45

After first examining a variety of ethical theories put forth in the philosophical tradition, such as utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics, students in this course will then explore ethical questions related to the production, distribution and consumption of food. For example, what obligations, if any, do we have to people who are hungry or starving? Is it ethical to consume meat or food products that come from non-human animals? Is it ethical to genetically modify
plants and non-human animals? Should genetically modified foods be labeled as such? What moral obligations, if any, do we have to practice certain forms of agriculture, to eat organic or to eat locally?

GETTYSBURG: MEMORY AND MEMORIALIZATION
HONR 320L112 and 324L112/HONR 380L113 and 390L113
Core: Literature or History
Pathway: American Studies
Dr. Nicholas Marshall and Prof. Mark Morreale

This course examines historical and literary memory, both in the ways perceptions of gender, race and class were formed (and transformed) by memory of the American Civil War, and how more recent sensibilities have reshaped these points of identity. Students will explore these issues fictionally, historically, and culturally by examining a variety of materials: including public history, poetry, fiction, art and film. What types of stresses did the mid- to late 19th Century put upon American culture, especially as those stresses impacted upon the relations between races and genders and how did these issues change over time? How did men and women define themselves in this crisis-laden age and how did those definitions inform the ways we see ourselves today? Readings will include 19th, 20th, and 21st century texts. Assignments will include creative projects, literary criticism, and historical research. The highlight of the course will be an April trip to the Gettysburg battlefield and museum, especially pertinent because the Gettysburg National Military Park will be commemorating the Civil War’s sesquicentennial, yet another way we remember and memorialize the past.

EXPLORING THE MATHEMATICS OF INFINITY
HONR 354L111 and 371L111
Honors: Science, Technology, and Society; Scientific and Quantitative Inquiry
Core: Mathematics
Pathway: Quantitative Studies
Dr. Tracey McGrail
M/R 12:30-1:45

How many integers are there? How many real numbers are there? Can one infinite set be bigger than another? What happens when you combine two infinite sets—does the set get bigger? This course explores these and other mathematical questions about infinity.

MADNESS AND THE ARTS
HONR 311L111 and 391L111
Honors: Versions of the Self; Individual and Society
Core: Psychology/Social Science
Pathway: Cognitive Studies
Dr. James Regan
T/R 11-12:15
This course will examine madness as it is portrayed in the arts. It will take an interdisciplinary approach to the question, including psychology, literature, film and media studies.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND POLICY
HONR 351L111
Honors: Science, Technology, and Society; Scientific and Quantitative Inquiry
Core: Natural Science
Pathway: Environmental Studies
Dr. Richard Feldman
M 11:00-12:15; W 9:30-10:45

A variety of learning approaches will be used to address a diversity of topics related to the environment, including the science, policy and social implications of those topics. This term we will have a special focus upon food production as it affects the environment, through readings, lectures, discussion and film. Additionally, we will develop the skill of observation of nature through a semester-long field journal assignment. This will include at least one visit to the college nature preserve as a class plus your own field time.