Capstone Courses 2014-2015

Summer 2014

Take Me Out to the Ball Game
1:20-4:00 pm Mon-Thur; June session
Rich Bowman, Jeff Holm
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Cinema, Character and Culture
ONLINE; June session
Heather Bart, Jeffrey Miller
This course revolves around the question: “What is the relationship and interaction between cinema, culture and being a person of character?” Through watching films and videos, reading books and essays, and discussing issues in class, we will examine how cinema and culture influence each other. We will explore how both cinema and culture contribute – positively and negatively – toward making human beings act as people of character. We are interested in asking to what extent can the character of human nature be affected by cinema and culture, and to what extent is human nature a given that merely creates reflections of itself in both cinema and culture?

Fall 2014

No Man is an Island
11:00 MWF, 11:00-12:50 T
Carrie Hall, Amy Lewis
By understanding the theory of island biogeography, students will examine the scientific consequences of isolation. Putting this information together with readings from conservation philosophy, students will have the opportunity to examine themselves as individuals and as interconnected pieces of the ecological whole. Should we consider a human being an island, aloof from the natural matrix? How then shall we think about conservation?

Revolutionary Fiction: Cuba
8:30-9:50 TR
Pilar Cabrera, Corey Conover
Fifty years of defiant socialism has earned Cuba a reputation in Americans’ imagination for political repression and economic shortages. This course will help you understand the island as Cubans do. By analyzing classic Cuban works of poetry and fiction, central themes of Cuban life will become clear: indignities and successes of a socialist experiment, fear of the U.S, exile, and the racial legacy of slavery. To make these stories more meaningful, our course examines the historical context that inspired authors: Spanish colonialism, U.S’ occupation of Cuba, Fidel Castro’s revolution, and the Cold War. Classes and readings are in English.
The Great War
11:00-12:20 TR
Patrick Hicks, Margaret Preston
World War I, known as the Great War in Britain, teaches us how dramatically the world had changed at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as how the arrogance of the few would require the ultimate sacrifice of the many. This course explores the question “how then shall we live?” by studying British history at the turn of the century. How then shall we live with societal expectations, especially those generated by gender, identity and nationalism? What were the ethical ramifications behind these choices? By weaving literature, art and film into the narrative of history, abiding moral and ethical issues will be explored.

Native American Cultural and Economic History
6:00-9:00pm Monday
Landon Karr, Robert Wright
This course is designed to consider the economic activities, relations, strategies and conditions of Native American nations from human habitation of North America to the present. The course stresses the ongoing complexity and change in Native American cultures/societies and will emphasize the theme of Native peoples’ creative adaptations to cultural and economic change. It also introduces students to key themes, ideas, and trends in the economic history of North America’s indigenous peoples by taking an issues-orientated and geographical approach.

Interim 2015

How Shall We Live as Digital Natives
Block II
Elizabeth Babcock, Sharon Gray
Technology is ever present in our lives. It can be used for good or evil. It can both improve the human condition and degrade it. It can bring us together and can isolate us. As educated individuals coming of age in the digital era, what does it mean to be technology responsible and aware? We will explore how technology alters our ways of thinking and being. We will explore the increasing lack of boundary between public and private life, and the implications for our fundamental identity, our relationships, and what it means to live as good life as “Digital Natives”.

Life’s Cycles
Block II
Jennifer Gubbels, Margaret Preston
This course will offer greater understanding of the history of medicine and how the hospital has become a central institution to the life cycle. Beginning with a historic and scientific discussion of conception and child-birth, the course will next focus on cancer as an example of one of the diseases to which the human body is susceptible and conclude with a discussion of death as part of life. In addition, the course will take on the history of the hospital and the medical personnel who work within. Central to each of these themes will be the ethical question and complexities that cannot be separated from the practical aspects of caring for life. Through case studies, invited guests and visits to off-site medical facilities, the class will offer students both an understanding of the history of medicine, a deeper understanding of the biology of reproduction and cancer, as well as the increasingly complex nature of the science of care. Through a discussion of the history, science and ethics of medicine this course will offer insight into how knowing the history of caring for life can offer understanding as to “how then shall we live?”
Nature and Nurture
Block I

*Olivia Lima, Seasson Vitiello*

This course aims to understand what makes us who we are by exploring both the influences of our genes (nature) and experiences (nurture). These two mechanisms cannot be easily teased apart, so students in the course will discover how nature and nurture interact. Students will encounter concepts in behavioral and basic molecular genetics through the exploration of the topics of eugenics, medical disorders, and whole genome sequencing. The question of how society should use empirical evidence to frame policy will be addressed, along with discussions about the roles of free will and personal accountability in these issues.

Reproduction and the Human Person: Scientific, Ethical, and Religious Perspectives
Block II

*Maureen Diggins, Ann Pederson*

Stories appear in the news that changed the way people understand beginnings of life. All of a sudden, people realize that the potential of technology to change the human being far exceeds their ability to cope with those changes. The plot line of the human story is moving faster than the species has expected. These larger cultural narratives of technology, human persons, medicine, and religion sharpen our questions about the world and what it means to be a part of it. The purpose of this class is to examine the sciences of human reproduction and what it means to be a human person in light of these reproductive sciences and bio-technologies.

Spring 2015

Troubling Times: Understanding Northern Ireland’s Modern History, Literature and Culture
11:00-12:20 TR

*Patrick Hicks, Margaret Preston*

This course will examine the literary and cultural history of Northern Ireland. It will highlight the Easter Rising of 1916 as the watershed event that brought dramatic social, economic, demographic, literary and political changes to the country. We will move forward to discuss the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921, what role World War II had on Belfast and Dublin, and we will focus most of our attention on the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland, a violent internal struggle which occurred from 1969-1998. The course will employ a number of other sources including, non-fiction, fiction, plays, poetry, film, music, oral history, and memoir. These readings, together with class lectures, writing assignments and discussion are designed to enable students to gain an understanding of the complex nature of Northern Irish society, and the events which changed that society over the past 100 years.
Envisioning the Ideal Society: Utopias and Dystopias
9:00-10:20 TR
Joel Johnson, Peter Schotten
This course focuses on the ways in which utopian and dystopian writers have answered the question “How then shall we live?” For utopian thinkers, crafting an imaginary world freed from the injustices and hardships of the present age helps to clarify priorities and motivate constructive socio-political change. For their part, dystopian thinkers emphasize the dangers of dreaming up alternatives without an adequate appreciation of human nature and the unintended consequences of radical change. Both utopias and dystopias, however, raise fundamental questions about the nature of justice, the proper relationship between individuals in society, and the mechanisms for bringing about change which are crucial for thoughtful citizens to consider. We will critically evaluate a variety of utopian and dystopian narratives in literature and film, in addition to discussing the ideological background of those narratives.

Daily Bread: The Ecology and Economics of Food
1:00-2:20 TR
Course Fee $25 to cover costs of serving dinner at The Banquet
Steven Matzner, Reynold Nesiba
In the Lord’s Prayer we ask God to “give us this day our daily bread.” Yet most of us rarely think about where our food comes from. This course will consider how our food choices impact other people and the environment. What we eat, how we organize food production, and how we control food distribution all have economic, ecological, and ethical impacts. Possible topics in this course include human population growth, global limits, the causes of global and local hunger, the role of agricultural policy, fair trade, SNAP, and the interconnections among food production, the environment, and the macro economy.

In addition to our scheduled time in class, the class will spend one Saturday morning and afternoon visiting a local dairy and hog farm. We will also spend one afternoon and evening preparing and serving food at The Banquet.

Popular Culture and the Bible: The Detective Story
Wednesdays, 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Richard Bowman
Even though their primary purpose is to entertain, detective stories still reflect the prevailing beliefs and values of the culture which creates and consumes them. As such, they are reflections of society, mirroring our beliefs about the possibility of social order and the problems of disorder. They particularly focus on social disruptions, their causes, consequences, and containment. This course will explore the cultural and theological dimensions as well as discuss the historical and literary development of the both secular and sacred stories portraying crime and its detection.
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