

## Recent HNRS Course Offerings – HNRS 110 and 120

### **HNRS 110**

#### **War, Society and Self**

This course is organized around the theme of war and the human experience. In this seminar we will study and compare Agincourt (1415) and the Hundred Years' War, the Somme (1916) and World War I, the Spanish Civil War (1936), and lastly, the Vietnam War (ca. 1968). While the focus will be on these wars, the general issues that we address will be broader in scope: Why do human beings go to war? What is the relationship between war and society, and to what extent are wars a reflection of the societies around them? What are the consequences of war? What is the experience of war like for those who participate in it? How do both participants and non-participants try to make sense of the experience of war? What is the relationship between war and heroism? How does one write about the experience of war? These and other questions will serve as the basis for our reflection on and discussion of war and the human experience.

#### **Narratives of Urban Space**

How do urbanites interact with urban space(s)? Urban space is not simply habitable space devoid of content or context dependent on its inhabitant's comings and goings, but is instead a space that both affects *and* is affected by the individual. In other words, a city is never neutral. It is ever an actor and amplifier - of oppression, of power, of action. The course examines the specific and dynamic relationship between the city and its inhabitants. We will use a selection of narratives from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to examine the dynamic ways authors represent the complex relationship between urban space and those who engage it. Our investigations will further trace this relationship between the city and its subjects across the narratives and spaces of class difference, ethnicity, gender, and other defining qualifications.

#### **Global Health Challenges**

What are the largest public health challenges facing the world today? What causes these challenges to persist, and what steps can be taken to ensure "health for all"? This course will survey the field of global health by examining global health challenges such as child mortality/undernutrition, HIV and other infectious disease, and heart disease/diabetes/obesity. We will pay particular attention to social aspects of disease causation, studying the cultural, historical, political, and economic differences that lead to inequities in health. We'll read notable ethnographic and scholarly depictions of global health challenges, critically assess past and current attempts at improving public health outcomes, and, through the use of case studies, research, and inquiry-based writing, learn to combine both medical and cultural knowledge in designing effective public health programs. In addition, we will apply our knowledge via work on a project designed to assist the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Palau.

#### **Heretics, Lunatics & Geniuses**

The scientific method should allow us to come to conclusions without bias; however, culture influences how science progresses. Cultural needs (e.g., stem cells for healing, clean water, and fuel) dictate the direction of research and can shape whole decades and even centuries of inquiry (e.g., cancer and the "god" particle). How has science inquiry evolved? This course will examine the current level of American scientific literacy, the value of critical thinking, and how science challenges American values.

### **Harnessing the Atom**

Does the world need nuclear energy? Is it safe? How did unpacking the inner workings of the atom lead to a nuclear bomb? In this course we will examine how scientists of the twentieth century harnessed the energy of the atom, bringing both benefits and risks. We will explore the development of nuclear science in the early twentieth century, following the extraordinary pace of scientific discovery and examining the concurrent socio-political changes that led to the development of the atomic bomb. But early nuclear scientists were not only focused on warfare. They foresaw great promise for energy generation. We will also explore how the atom is harnessed for energy production and assess the viability, safety, and current promise of nuclear energy.

### **Into Larger Worlds**

Roanoke College's *Freedom with Purpose* statement explains that a liberal arts education "leads us out from small, safe worlds into larger, more interesting ones." How might we most effectively engage with those worlds, learning from the perspectives of others? How can we best incorporate our engagement with different experiences and perspectives into our own worldview and aspirations? In this course we'll explore ethnographic depictions of the lives of individuals in cultures both strange and familiar. You'll use the ethnographic process to examine and share your own forays into larger, more interesting worlds both in your new adventures on campus and in communities beyond campus walls.

## **HNRS 120**

### **Beyond Sustainability**

Sustainable development asks that we find a balance between the often-competing goals of environmental integrity, economic prosperity, and social equity (the 5 Ps of people, planet, peace, partnership, and prosperity). At its most fundamental level, sustainability implies persistence over time and the ability to meet today's needs without limiting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Yet, this vision of sustainability suggests that we both know what needs to be sustained and that there is some stable baseline towards which we can direct our efforts. On a planet where climate and the fundamental cycles of the Earth itself are shirting-where continual change has become the new normal-are these viable goals? Or is it possible to push our thinking beyond sustainability and innovate pathways forward that support ecological function, promote resilience, and enhance our ability to respond and adapt to changing conditions?

### **Feminist Ethics**

Birth control, abortion, prostitution, housework, sexuality, gender, care, love... Who gets to decide what is "right" and "good"? For centuries, scholars have explored these very questions. This course uses the concept of "reproduction" as a central focus for the interdisciplinary exploration of feminist ethics. The politics of reproduction often focus on how people of different genders are able to use their bodies in public and private ways. Beyond this, we also explore the concept of "social reproduction": how unpaid and underpaid labor (such as domestic labor and care work, often performed by women and people of color) is essential to the functioning of the capitalist economy. We will engage with multiple traditions of ethical thought: feminist theory, queer theory, Marxism, anarchism, and more. Note that sensitive issues such as rape will be discussed in this class.

### **The Moral of Our Story**

The theme for this course in moral philosophy is "The Moral of Our Story." We will engage in moral reasoning by reading the accounts of slaves, POWs, holocaust survivors, and also by examining

important events in the 20th century such as the bombing of Hiroshima and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Through these non-fiction narratives we will gain insight into questions such as: What makes some moral decisions better than others? What are our capacities to be good and to be bad? Is there a real difference between right and wrong, or is morality “all relative”? We might find that these narratives show that our stories have things in common, and that we might say there is a moral to our story.

### **2050: Ten Billion**

By 2050, ten billion people may inhabit the Earth, all needing access to essential but limited resources, such as water, food, and medicine. Unfortunately, not all of those people will have equal access to these resources, as they are not distributed evenly around the planet. In this section of HNRS 120, we will ask the question – given these facts – “Can ten billion people live ‘good lives’ when resources are limited?”

### **True Freedom**

How might we live? In order to allow you to begin answering this question we will examine the work of 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza. The task is not simply to reproduce Spinoza’s answer, but through reading, writing, and class discussion formulate and argue for your own answer.