

High Point University

Fall 2022 Intellectual Discovery (DIS) Course Descriptions

African American Humor

George Carlin once said, "every comic sees the world through a prism the average person doesn't see through." By looking at smaller, alternative facets of daily life, we visualize a more complete picture. For this course we will examine African American humor and its connections, contributions, and critiques on modern American life. We will examine theoretical explanations for African American laughter and how it manifests in popular texts. We will use scholarly texts and documentaries, to analyze the sociohistorical importance of African American popular materials such as folk humor, comedy sketches, television shows, political cartoons, and standup comedy shows to explore the intersections of the African American and American experience.

Beyond DC and Marvel

In this course, students gain visual literacy and interpretation skills through the reading of a range of graphic texts. Primarily, we will focus on the emergent genre of the graphic novel, using comic strips and popular superhero texts as a jumping-off point to better understand their literary siblings in which complex questions of identity and ethics are explored. Students will learn how to read the parallel narratives inherent to graphic texts, the nuances of visual rhetoric, and the fraught semantic relationship between text and images. Course readings will conclude with an exploration of historical and contemporary literary forms in which text and images meaningfully blend and intersect. Students will also have opportunities to try their hand(s) at creating visual texts both individually, and in pairs.

Clothing Icons Through the Ages

The student will learn to see clothing as more than an aesthetic statement and that clothing is a clear reflection of society during a particular time period. The course will explore various clothing styles and images throughout history and identify the political, economic, religious and social influences that impacted the development of each look. Students will explore, research and study fashion throughout history until modern times. These objectives will be accomplished by reading the text, researching historical clothing resources, participating in classroom discussions and engaging in both individual and group projects that require critical thinking, oral presentation and writing skills to successfully complete.

Comedy, Culture, and Why We Laugh

In this course, we will explore the significance of an often-underappreciated feature of human life: humor. We will engage meaningfully with one another about what we find humorous, what humor is, why we find things humorous, what humor can be used to do, why context matters, and how morality affects what we find funny. Using a wide variety of resources on and off of this syllabus (e.g., students' experiences, recorded interviews with professional comedians, psychology literature, evolutionary biology literature), we will make useful connections among different academic disciplines, social practices, and our personal lives. This course invites students to investigate and, through critical analysis and discussion, develop thoughtful reasons for their positions.

Detective Fiction & the Quest for Knowledge

In this course, we will resist the notion that detective stories are merely page-turners or guilty pleasures by posing a fundamental question that lies at the root of all mysteries: What social and psychological forces drive the desire to know? In pursuit of this "big question," we will have to address several other questions that help us analyze the genre's enduring appeal and place it in its historical, sociological, cultural, and literary contexts: When did the detective story originate and how has it evolved? Why do most mysteries revolve around the crime of murder? How do famous literary detectives both reflect and challenge the values of the societies in which they work? How do the particular plot devices of these stories help us comprehend the basic narrative structure of concealment and revelation? The syllabus will include works by the following authors (among others): Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, and Dashiell Hammett. Course assignments will also invite students to explore the genre through television series and films such as the BBC's *Sherlock* and Christopher Nolan's *Memento*.

Elite Athletes: Born or Bred

Is it true that Kenyans are the best distance runners? Or that "white men can't jump"? What does it mean to have "the mind of a champion"? This First Year Seminar will explore the genetic, psychological, and cultural influences on sport participation and performance. Drawing on primary research, critical essays, and popular media sources, we will explore controversial topics such as genotyping for athletic performance and social influences in youth sport culture, as well as ethical dilemmas such as those raised by recent advances in sport science and use of ergogenic aids in elite competition.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Fashion Statement: Power, Image, and Women in Britain

This course will analyze the ways in which British women leaders (from 1500 to the present) used fashion and public image to cultivate their enduring historical memory. Students will consider when a leader successfully cultivated a cult of personality, for example Elizabeth I, versus a leader who was unable to control negative public opinion to create a positive historical legacy, for example Mary I. Students will also explore why a female leader's focus on public image and persona are often just as important as the policies she makes in a larger male-dominated society. To accurately understand the relationship between image and legacy, this course will use art, poetry, biography, personal letters, music, and other various media to gauge how leaders chose to be perceived to their public and how the public actually perceived the leader. This course will also explore the complex construct of "British" as students explore how the various leaders were challenged or supported because of their cultural background, for example the Queen Consorts from other countries who married British kings versus the Queens who were born and raised in Britain.

Harry Potter: Understanding Good & Evil

The struggle between good and evil has plagued academics and everyday people for centuries. Philosophers, theologians, psychologists, writers, and others have attempted to determine what it is that makes something—or someone—good and what makes them evil. In this course, we will examine this debate through the lens of J.K. Rowling's famous Harry Potter series, and see how she, and her readers, utilize elements of the debate between good and evil.

History of Video Games

This course will guide you in answering a central question: How have video games both shaped and been shaped by new technologies and societal trends, and what can they tell us about the future of entertainment in the 21st century? The (relatively) new medium of video games has a history that is linked not only with the development of new technology, but also with broader societal trends. How has the ubiquity of mobile technologies, such as phones and tablets, lead to the increasing popularity of "casual" games, and how does that affect what kinds of games people play? How has competition within the games industry lead to technological breakthroughs which impact not only video games, but other industries as well? What does it mean to call oneself a "gamer," and what are the explicit and implicit messages around who gets to play video games in our society? In this course, you will become both a historian of games as well as a futurist who is able to spot trends and make predictions about the future of games and other forms of interactive media. By examining how video games and their role in society have shifted since their inception, you will be able to analyze current happenings in the world of games and predict what might happen next. Most importantly, as the history of video games is still being written, you will reflect on your active role in shaping the directions that games go in next, as critical consumers and perhaps even as designers.

Liberated Learning

This class introduces students to the value of a liberal arts college education. It covers how a liberal arts education is distinctive from a college education in general, particularly regarding how it inspires students to become free-thinkers, to improve oneself, to apply their education toward personal growth, and to better understand oneself within the world.

Literary Darwinism: A Missing Link

Have you ever wondered why we surround ourselves with stories? We devour a favorite book, our hearts pound when we watch a scary movie, and we delight in the telling of a good yarn, whether real or imagined. When we're sleeping, we even dream them! Some of our earliest memories revolve around make believe, and while we may not view ourselves as "creative" individuals, we create and consume elaborate narratives our entire lives. Whether they are real life experiences or flights of fancy, stories absorb our hearts and minds, and help us navigate life's complex social problems. Some say that we are "wired" for it, but why? How do stories help us survive? Literary Darwinism is a relatively new and controversial theory built upon the interdisciplinary concept known as STEAM, the integration of the Arts into the traditional framework of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. By exploring our shared evolutionary history through the juxtaposition of ancestral heritage and modern dystopic narratives, students will build intellectual STEAM, solidifying our place as the storytelling animal and proving why, indeed, we can't live without stories.

Marketing and Pop Culture

This course addresses the marketing concept of positioning and the controversial rise of product placement in popular media such as film and television. Using a variety of examples, this course seeks to emphasize how product or brand placement in popular media is used to position products in the consumer's mind. Students will be challenged to think critically about these types of placements and to question the ethics and effectiveness of such positioning attempts.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Military History of Middle Earth

J.R.R. Tolkien created a world with mythical creatures, languages and histories that in many ways paralleled his personal experience and his perceptions of contemporary conflicts. He combined his observations with his love of Anglo-Saxon, Old English and Norse legends to produce a world with its own vibrant history. This course will explore the relationship between Tolkien's personal experiences in a world war, and living through a second, and how that affected the development of the themes, fictional states, characters and their actions during the wars of the First, Second and Third Ages of Middle Earth. Furthermore, the course will explore how Tolkien used the histories and myths to develop a complex world and the epic wars fought.

Minds, Machines, and Human Beings

In this course, we'll delve into deep questions about human nature, consciousness, existence, knowledge, and meaning. To explore philosophical concepts from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives, we will use a mixture of short stories, scholarly readings, video clips, movies, and computer programs to investigate fundamental questions in a colorful way.

Music, Resilience, and Life Skills

A liberal arts education is concerned with forming the whole person; music almost certainly plays a significant role in your life already, and it may intersect with major in interesting ways. At the conclusion of the course, you should have a better understanding of how music works, as well as its ability to shape and connect people in community, enhance resilience, and build such life skills as creative thinking, collaboration, and growth-mindset.

Napoleon's Hat and the Art of War

The Duke of Wellington said, "Napoleon's hat is worth 40,000 men on the battlefield." This seminar will explore the art of war and military command in the Modern world. Is war an art or science? Military commanders have approached this question from both perspectives. The course will examine military thought and practice and the changing nature of leadership from Frederick the Great to the present.

On Creativity

Through exploring and applying theories of creativity, students will consider the relationship between making and knowing. This course positions stories, poetry, and memoir about creativity alongside research and application from a range of fields and perspectives. Through reading, discussion, writing, and hands-on activities, students will examine ideas about innovation.

Political Leadership

Do you have what it takes to become a leader? This seminar investigates how political leaders come to power, exercise their will and establish their historical legacies across different types of societies. Using academic research, biographies and film portrayals of leaders in action, students will analyze various patterns and techniques of effective leadership with a goal of discovering their own leadership potential. One of the main goals of this class is to stimulate (1) intra and interpersonal skills and (2) integrated learning via student input, questions, and discussion as well as course essay assignments. The seminar uses teaching methods explicitly designed to encourage student input, questions, and discussion. In most meetings, I will either engage the class with a two-way, interactive lecture on topics and issues not covered in your reading assignments or guide a dialogue based on your assigned readings. In both cases, I typically will organize our classroom exchanges around a loosely structured format that relies on your active, informed class participation. While a series of focus questions will keep our discussion on track and help you to identify major ideas and concepts, you should consider our classroom as a place of debate and conversation where your input and ideas are a critical component of student learning. Thus, please aim to make the most of our seminars and class exercises by consistently coming to class well-read and fully prepared to ask questions, to comment insightfully on the day's reading assignments and to engage the ideas and perspectives of other students.

Power Plays

What role should the arts have in responding to and affecting political power? In this course, we will go back in time to Elizabethan England where offending those in power could result in punishment far more serious than being thrown in the Clink. Being exposed as a Catholic could get you tortured; speaking ill of the Queen could result in your head jammed on a London Bridge pike. Playwrights such as Marlowe and Shakespeare wrote about power for both the powerful and the common folk, occasionally raising the censors' eyebrows. We will explore the nature of power with the emphasis on play--what the International Shakespeare's Globe calls *lively action*. Through our play work, we will explore how the historical, political, and cultural moment of the Elizabethans can be put in conversation with our present time. The course will culminate in a Reacting to the Past game where you will play a role and strategize for power to win the game. How will you negotiate the politics of power? Will you end up in the Clink?

Science Makes Art Better...

This Intellectual Discovery course explores the intersection of science with the visual arts. Basic principles of science (with an emphasis on chemistry and materials science due to the instructor's background) will be applied to the topics of color, paint, paper, clay, glass, metals, photography, and art restoration. No prior knowledge of chemistry is assumed, and minimal math skills are required. Four hours lecture with integrated lab/studio activities.

Talking About Freedom

This course is also about race relations or, more specifically, how the struggle for black civil rights can act as a metaphor or model for anyone yearning to be free. Using the story of race relations in America as an organizing narrative, this course is intended to shed light on the larger story of America in surprising ways. It might surprise you to learn, for instance, that every significant juncture in the evolution of Constitutional law in America was triggered directly or indirectly by events related to race. And it might surprise you to learn that it is not judges on the bench but people working outside the courts – from politicians in Washington to activists at the local level, from lobbyists and business groups to journalists and legal scholars – who are the main drivers of change in constitutional law. They are the non-judicial actors who shape and re-shape America's ever-evolving constitutional culture.

The Gothic

Why do we fear death? In what ways should we confront fear, especially the fear of death? This section will look at Gothic literature, typically defined by texts involving fears of death, terror, horror, suspense, and the uncanny. This literary mode most often features ghostly figures, a pervasive sense of doom, a link to a removed, ancient time, place, and mode of thinking, and the impression of a descent into mental, physical, and architectural collapse. The course will consider stories of medieval villains in abandoned castles and ones questioning the fear of death in the contemporary world. We will read "classic" Gothic works from the eighteenth century and newer ones as we consider the ways writers have engaged the fear of death in literature.

The Search for Intelligent Life in the Universe

Are we humans alone in the Universe? That is the big question we will explore in this course. We will explore current scientific views of origins, how the Universe, our planet, life, and humans came to be. We will take a journey through the various factors that will determine the likelihood of finding another planet with intelligent life in our galaxy by exploring the factors in the famous Drake Equation. Along the way, we will look at current projects that are helping us answer some of our questions, like the rovers searching for evidence of past water and life on Mars, the TESS space telescope looking for Earth-like planets around other stars, and the SETI Institute programs listening for alien communications. Finally, we will investigate claims that Earth has been visited by alien life already.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

The Shell I'm in: Phenomenology of the Body

The purpose of this course is to examine relationships between bodies and worlds, and what that means for having a sense of self. In short, this course invites you to go beyond a typical understanding of the body to look deeper at how our bodies fit (and don't fit) within society and are a physically and socially constructed entity that influences our identity. The way we move, adorn, and utilize our bodies reflects and helps shape our sense of who we are; so much so in fact, it is thought that our appearance is linked with our essence. Grasping the significance of the body involves studies of historical, social, and cultural variations in experience and identity. We must recognize how our own bodies and identities are located within a particular social, cultural, and historical context.

What Does it Mean to Be Human?

What does it mean to be human? What physical, emotional, intellectual, religious, or imaginative traits do we believe constitute "being human"? How have definitions of humanity changed over time? This course analyzes what it means to be human from the perspectives of a wide variety of disciplines and written and visual genres.

Who owns the Past? Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Who owns the past? Who creates the knowledge that defines what is history? These questions, both practical and theoretical frame this class. The main topics of our course are the impact of the past on the present, and the impact of the present on the past. Thus, we will be looking both at how the past plays a role in contemporary society, and impacts contemporary archaeological research, management and conservation. In a world marked by rapid globalization and rapidly changing technology, heritage presents a particular paradox. Increasingly, heritage sites are flash-points in cultural and religious conflicts around the globe. A majority of heritage sites have had archaeological excavations conducted at them and this evidence is used to justify the significance of these sites. Heritage can also be viewed as a unifying force in nation-building and in forging international alliances. Clearly, "history" matters – but how do certain histories come to matter in particular ways, and to whom? How is research on the past shaped through present-day concerns about identity, community, and nation, alongside transnational flows of people, money, and goods? And finally, is cultural heritage a universal right?

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Why is America Hungry?

In this course we will examine food insecurity versus food security in the United States and how it affects quality of food choices. We will discuss ethical issues that occur with hunger and poverty in the United States such as eligibility requirements for food assistance and access to healthy food options. We will discuss the role food has in overall health and in our lives. We will also examine the chronic diseases that individuals put themselves at risk for when eating energy dense filling foods. We will look to answer the big question of: What is the impact of food insecurity on a community? How does the effect of food insecurity on a community magnify issues of inequity or injustices?

Why The Beatles?

How have the Beatles, the most successful musical act in history, managed to maintain their astonishing hold on the public imagination continually since they burst onto the scene in the early 1960s? What is the source of this group's power to maintain their popularity, relevance, and captivate three generations of fans? This course examines the Beatles, both in their own time and ours. By looking in depth at this ongoing artistic and cultural phenomenon through several lenses, students will practice and strengthen their research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Students will also formulate a Beatle-specific answer to the course's Big Question: whence genius? What are the distinguishing characteristics of great artistic achievement, and where do these characteristics come from?