

# Fall 2022 Honors Courses



SOUTHERN  
VIRGINIA  
UNIVERSITY

## Focus Courses

An honors focus course (**HNR 219R**) is a discussion-based course focusing on a work or artist of major significance to world civilization. It meets once per week for seven weeks—a half-semester or “block”—before a final exam. All Southern Virginia students, whether in the Honors Program or not, are welcome to enroll in focus courses. There are no prerequisites. Honors students must complete at least six focus courses for University Honors. Sign up through mySVU. First-year students should contact registrar@svu.edu or their academic advisor to add a focus course to their schedules.

### FALL 2022 BLOCK 1 (AUG. 24–OCT. 12)

#### **HNR 219R 01 Conrad's *Lord Jim* (0.5), M 4:30–5:20 p.m.**

A sea adventure, heroic tale, and depiction of the growth of global trade and commerce, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* explores the status of the individual in a complex and expanding world. Published in 1900, it can be seen, quite literally, as an introduction to the 20th century with all the challenges of a more fully mapped and connected world.

Instructor: Scott Dransfield

#### **HNR 219R 02 Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (0.5), T 4:00–4:50 p.m.**

During World War II, Viktor Frankl spent three years at Auschwitz, Dachau, and other concentration camps. Many of his experiences and his developing thoughts on life, love, and ultimate meaning are chronicled in his memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, in which he references and examines Nietzsche's maxim, “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.” We will explore Frankl's ideas on how to instill life with meaning by examining his thoughts on courage during difficult times, relationships, and creativity.

Instructor: Michael Gibbons

#### **HNR 219R 03 Toomer's *Cane* (0.5), M 3:30–4:20 p.m.**

Just after World War I, Black and African-American art, music, literature, and dance received new publicity as a wider audience recognized the new vital voices in American culture. This time and output are often referred to as the Harlem Renaissance, and it coincided with the artistic movement called “High Modernism.” The book that best exemplifies the fusion of modernism and the Harlem Renaissance is Jean Toomer's hybrid 1923 novel *Cane*, a masterpiece of careful social critique, profound poetry, and formal experimentation. We will discuss the social and literary context of this novel and its continued impact on how we view race, America, and art. We will discuss the questions that the novel raises, and together we will create areas of inquiry from the novel's treatment of race, America, and art.

Instructor: James Lambert

**HNR 219R 04 Mengzi (0.5), F 8:00–8:50 a.m.**

Two centuries after Confucius, the brilliant philosopher Mengzi (or Mencius, 372–289 B.C.) defended a Confucian way of life against two extremes: egoism and universalism. The egoists held that human nature is completely selfish, while the universalists thought that people can and should be trained to care about everyone equally. In response to the egoists, Mengzi argued that humans naturally feel compassion for the suffering of other animals and humans and that this compassion can and should be cultivated into the virtue of benevolence. In response to the universalists, Mengzi argued that humans naturally care more for their own parents and family members than for people outside their families and that a good human life includes participation in family and community rituals. We'll examine Mengzi's arguments on human nature, virtue, and society and apply them to today.

Instructor: John Armstrong

**FALL 2022 BLOCK 2 (OCT. 13–DEC. 15)**

**HNR 219R 05 Einstein's *Relativity* (0.5), Th 2:30–3:20 p.m.**

Albert Einstein wrote his explanation of the Special and General Theories of Relativity shortly after the 1919 eclipse made him the 20th century's first worldwide science celebrity. His genius was to see how things would work in extreme situations that are not encountered in our usual everyday earth-bound experience; nevertheless, those principles form the foundation of how the universe works. Although the mathematics of warped space-time and black holes is beyond the scope of our discussion, Einstein's explanation of these ideas is clear and understandable. All it takes is a little effort, quite a bit of imagination, and the ability to rewire one's brain.

Instructor: Timothy Knudson

**HNR 219R 06 Poetry by Native American Women (0.5), M 3:30–4:20 p.m.**

In "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," Louise Erdrich writes, "Home's the place we head for in our sleep. / Boxcars stumbling north in dreams / don't wait for us. We catch them on the run." Native American poets like Erdrich, Joy Harjo, and Georgiana Valoyce-Sanchez are often omitted from courses in American poetry as if they didn't have as much or more to say about this country and its history. In this course, we'll focus exclusively on these Native American female poets and the ways they construct an alternative narrative for America's past, present, and future.

Instructor: Sarah Maitland

**HNR 219R 07 Hildegard of Bingen's *Causes and Cures* (0.5), Th 8:30–9:20 a.m.**

Hildegard of Bingen was a 12th-century abbess, polymath, saint, and visionary. Famous for her visions, scientific works, musical compositions, and political influence, Hildegard is remembered as one of the most influential female intellectuals of the European medieval period. We will study her work *Causes and Cures*, a foundational medical and mystical text that explores the connection between human beings, the cosmos around them, the God who created all of it, and the ability to use this knowledge to heal the human body.

Instructor: Andrew Sorber

**HNR 219R 08 Émilie du Châtelet's *Foundations of Physics* (0.5), T 2:30–3:20 p.m.**

In 1740, Émilie du Châtelet published her *Foundations of Physics*, a work of physics, philosophy of science, and epistemology. The work had an immediate impact: Voltaire, Leonhard Euler, and Kant all read it, and the creators of the famous French *Encyclopédie* plagiarized many passages from the book. It's also had a renaissance in the 2010s, as many philosophers have begun to study it for the first time. But how, almost 300 years ago, was a self-taught woman able to create such an original and enduring contribution to scientific thought? We'll read the most important parts of the *Foundations*, and we'll learn about why we now consider it one of the most important books written on science and philosophy in the 18th century.

Instructor: Bryce Gessell

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## Seminars

An honors seminar (HNR 395R) is a discussion-based course on an interdisciplinary topic related to an issue treated in one or more of the university's core courses. Honors students must complete at least one honors seminar for University Honors. Prerequisites: honors student and junior or senior class standing.

**FALL 2022 SEMESTER (AUG. 24–DEC. 15)**

**HNR 395R 01 Climate Change and Politics (3), MWF 9:00–9:50 a.m.**

Climate has always had an effect on the prospects for human life on earth, but it is only in our time that human activity has had such a great effect on climate. While climate change presents economic and social challenges today, many thoughtful observers believe that it could also have a profound impact on human history, and even the natural history of life on earth, for centuries to come. This course will study the science of climate change, including what we know and how we know it as well as what we don't know and what future projections of action and inaction indicate. In addition, the course will examine the economic history of the development of fossil fuels, the political economy of energy in the present day, and the current political resources and organizations used by environmental groups to pursue policies to address climate change. Cross-listed with BIO 375R and POL 375R.

Instructors: Samuel Hirt & Jeremiah John

**HNR 395R 02 Infinity and Beyond: Metaphysics, Borges, and the Marvel Universe (3), MW 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.**

Art and literature are able to reflect on the human condition in philosophically astute ways. In this seminar, we'll examine philosophy's role in the Marvel Universe, "The Good Place," and the short stories of the great 20th-century Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. We'll see philosophical theories of personhood, identity, infinity, change, reality, morality, and the purpose of life and the afterlife in these works and thereby better appreciate the questions they raise about the human condition. Cross-listed with PHI 335R.

Instructors: Jan-Erik Jones & Iana Konstantinova

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## Thesis

### FALL 2022 SEMESTER (AUG. 24–DEC. 15)

#### **HNR 497 01 Honors Thesis Research (1)**, *weekly time by mutual arrangement*

A particular honors thesis might require a preliminary period for research. This optional course allows an honors student to conduct that research under the supervision of a faculty member knowledgeable in the field. The student's research proposal must be approved by that faculty member and the honors program director before the semester begins. The student meets weekly with the faculty supervisor to report on progress. The course may be approved for one, two, or three credit hours, depending on the scale of the student's project. This course is not required for University Honors. Prerequisites: honors student, junior or senior class standing, consent of instructor, and consent of the honors program director.

Instructor: John Armstrong and a faculty member in the discipline of the thesis

#### **HNR 498 01 Honors Thesis (2)**, *weekly time by mutual arrangement*

The honors thesis is the capstone of the honors student's college education. It is a student-driven, faculty-supervised, research-based thesis. The course may be a supervised independent study or cross-listed with a senior paper course, although the honors thesis is more in-depth and usually longer than a senior paper. The student completes weekly assignments and meets at least weekly with the faculty supervisor. The course may be approved for two or three credit hours, depending on whether it is an independent study or a course that meets three hours per week. This course is required for University Honors. Prerequisites: honors student, senior class standing, consent of instructor, and consent of honors program director.

Instructor: John Armstrong and a faculty member in the discipline of the thesis

For more information about the Honors Program, visit [svu.edu/honors](https://svu.edu/honors).

