

Fall 2023 Honors Courses



Focus Courses

An honors focus course (HNR 219R) is a discussion-based course on a work or artist of major significance to world civilization. It meets once a 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 2023 BLOCK 1 (AUG. 23–OCT. 11)

HNR 219R 01 Shaw's *All God's Dangers* (.5)

All God's Dangers records the oral history of the illiterate sharecropper Nate Shaw, whose real name was Ned Cobb. He became a political activist for Black and poor farmers' interests in the South in the early 20th century. The book is also the most important record of the Alabama Sharecroppers Union, an important early civil rights organization of which Cobb was a member. Ned Cobb's amazing life and his exceptional storytelling ability were discovered by the historian Theodore Rosengarten in the early 1970s and transcribed in a series of long interviews. *All God's Dangers* won the National Book Award for contemporary non-fiction in 1974, beating such famous books as *All the President's Men*, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and Robert Caro's biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*. *All God's Dangers* is one of the most important autobiographies in Black American history and among the most compelling memoirs of American political activism.

Instructor & Time: Jeremiah John, T 2:00–2:50 p.m.

HNR 219R 02 Poetry of Robert Frost (.5)

The quintessential American poet, Robert Frost was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature 31 times. He won four Pulitzer Prizes and was the first poet to present at a presidential inauguration. His definition of poetry was deceptively simplistic: “saying more with less.” We will examine the deeper meaning of Frost's poetry and, while examining his most famous works, focus on some of his more obscure poems. Was he hopeful or jaded, simple or complex? Indeed, “Nothing Gold Can Stay.”

Instructor & Time: Joseph Bouchelle, W 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 03 Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (.5)

Written by noted black novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) tells the epic tale of Janie Crawford through three marriages. Her quest for identity takes her on a journey in which she learns about love, the joys and sorrows of life, and the importance of coming home to herself in peace. Her experience teaches her that there are “two things everybody’s got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves.”

Instructor & Time: Ariel Silver, W 8:00–8:50 a.m.

HNR 219R 04 Plato's *Gorgias* (.5)

Gorgias of Leontini was a famous sophist in ancient Greece. He taught rhetoric, the power of speaking persuasively before an audience. Plato wrote a fictional dialogue in which Gorgias and his students say that they want to make people believe their words but don't care whether their messages make people better off. Socrates argues that a true rhetorician should want genuine happiness for the listeners and that happiness requires the cultivation of virtue. As he makes his case, Socrates refutes the notion of happiness as pleasure, desire-satisfaction, or rule over others.

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, Th 2:00–2:50 p.m.

HNR 219R 05 St. John's Gospel in Greek (.5)

What did the apostle John mean when he wrote, "In the beginning was the *logos*"? We will discuss that question and others about John's understanding of Christ as we slowly read the first chapters of his gospel in the original Greek and learn some basic Greek grammar. No prior knowledge of Greek is required.

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, F 9:00–9:50 a.m.

FALL 2023 BLOCK 2 (OCT. 12–DEC. 14)**HNR 219R 06 Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (.5)**

Published in 1856, *Aurora Leigh* is a “novel in verse” in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning addresses issues of social and political importance including marriage, women’s physical and intellectual freedom, and the production and importance of art. She pursues these topics through the first-person account of her main character, Aurora Leigh, who—like Barrett Browning—is a poet in an age when women were discouraged from literary pursuits. The poem, sometimes called “the feminist poem,” was popular and controversial, although its fame was eclipsed by Barrett Browning’s *Letters to the Portuguese* in the years after her death. *Aurora Leigh* is worthy of study both for its engagement with social issues of its time and its experimental poetic form.

Instructor & Time: Sarah Maitland, M 3:30–4:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 07 Sophocles's Theban Plays (.5)

Sophocles's Theban plays—*Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*—rank among the most influential literary works in the Western tradition. They not only helped define the genre of tragedy but also attracted the meditations of philosophers for centuries afterward, from Aristotle to Hegel to Freud. In all, these Greek dramas comprise searching investigations into the nature of knowledge, family, political life, and justice—not to mention one of the most thrilling “whodunits” in world literature.

Instructor & Time: Dallin Lewis, W 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 08 Rumi's *Masnavi* (.5)

Jalal al-Din Rumi was a 13th-century Persian poet and mystic, one of the most influential poets in world history, far beyond the Islamic world. The *Masnavi*, his greatest work, is a poetic collection of fables, legends, historical anecdotes, visions, and jokes, all meant to help the reader better understand the relationship between God, humanity, and the love that binds them. We will explore the first book of the *Masnavi*.

Instructor & Time: Andrew Sorber, Th 8:30–9:20 a.m.

HNR 219R 09 King's *Strength to Love* (.5)

Strength to Love is a collection of speeches and sermons by the late American Civil Rights icon and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It highlights King's philosophy of non-violence and his belief in the power of love to overcome hate and prejudice. Through his powerful words and personal anecdotes, King inspires us to look within ourselves and find the courage and determination to stand for what is right and do our part to make the world better and more just.

Instructor & Time: Michael Gibbons, M 4:30–5:20 p.m.

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 2023 SEMESTER (AUG. 23–DEC. 14)

HNR 395R 01 Happiness (3)

What have we learned about human flourishing from centuries of philosophical debate, prophetic teaching, and psychological research? Is it a matter of luck, effort, or both? How much does it depend on physical health, personal relationships, social status, creative activity, intellectual engagement, faith in God, connection to nature, experience of beauty, or other factors? We will investigate these

questions as we develop our own conceptions of happiness through study, discussion, and writing. Cross-listed with PHI 345R and PSY 375R.

Instructors & Time: John Armstrong & Michael Gibbons, TR 8:00–9:15 a.m.

HNR 395R 02 Minds, Brains, and Neuroscience (3)

To what extent is it possible to know things about the mind? Philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience all assume that their methods are capable of gaining such knowledge, and studies in those fields take the effectiveness of the methods for granted. This class will not make that assumption and will not take any method for granted. Instead, we will investigate the methods themselves. We will examine not lists of findings but how the methods actually work—to determine what, if anything, it is possible for us to know about the mind. Cross-listed with PHI 335R and PSY 375R.

Instructor & Time: Bryce Gessell, MWF 12:30–1:20 p.m.

Thesis

FALL 2023 SEMESTER (AUG. 23–DEC. 14)

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

A particular honors thesis might require a preliminary period of 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.

