

Spring 2023 Honors Courses



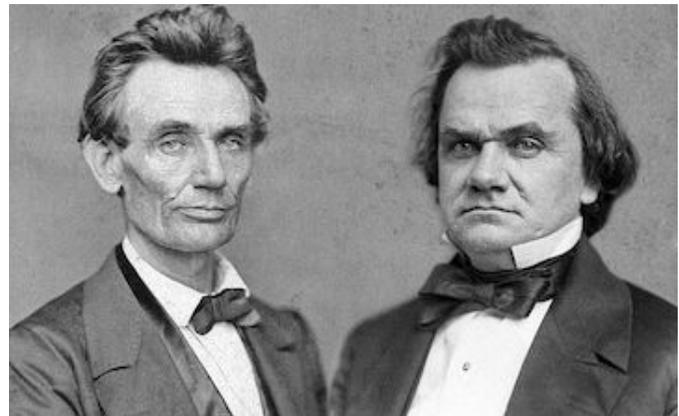
Focus Courses

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.

SPRING 2023 BLOCK 1 (JAN. 18–MARCH 8)

HNR 219R 01 The Lincoln-Douglas Debates (0.5)

The seven public debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas during their 1958 campaign for the United States Senate are among the most well-known political speeches in American political history. Although Lincoln lost the Senate race, he edited and published the text of the debates soon after the campaign, and the success of the printed edition helped propel him to the presidency two years later. The main topic of the debates was slavery in the United States, but both Lincoln and Douglas



Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas

connected the question of slavery to democracy itself. For Lincoln, tolerance for slavery made a mockery of the principles of the Declaration of Independence, while for Douglas, “popular sovereignty” meant that the federal government should not take a position where the public was so bitterly divided. These debates are as relevant as ever, as American politics continues to grapple with questions of deep moral disagreement and with the question of whether and how democracy should resolve them.

Instructor & Time: Jeremiah John, M 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 02 Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber* (0.5)

Hailed as one of the great novels of the world, *Dream of the Red Chamber* is a touchstone of Chinese culture and one of the country's most studied works of literature. Its author, Cao Xueqin (1715–1763), drew on his own family's meteoric rise to political prominence and their subsequent fall into abject poverty, along with a meditation on the influential women of his life, to create a work that stands

alongside Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. This 18th-century novel's exploration of truth, reality, class, and politics provides a vivid depiction of traditional Chinese culture and life. We will read the first volume of Hawkes's definitive translation.

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

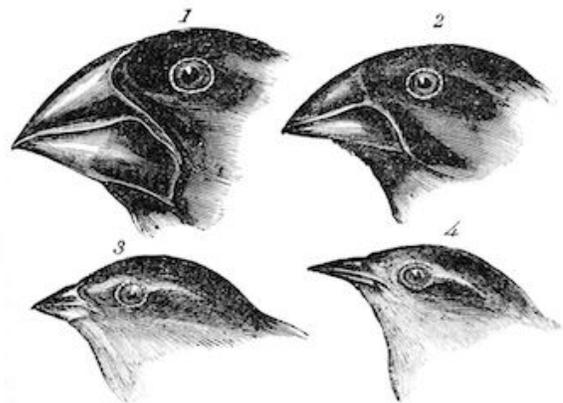


Sun Wen's painting of a scene from the novel, 19th century

HNR 219R 03 Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (0.5)

Evolution was an emerging idea when Charles Darwin (1809–1882) published his book in 1859. However, previous arguments for evolution lacked a mechanism that explained how evolution worked. Natural selection was Darwin's major contribution. The *Origin* presented his idea and expanded it with numerous examples that he had collected over 20 years. Darwin set forth many ideas that became the foundation of evolutionary biology. Even in the 21st century, evolutionary biologists remark on how much Darwin got right with the limited understanding of inheritance in his day.

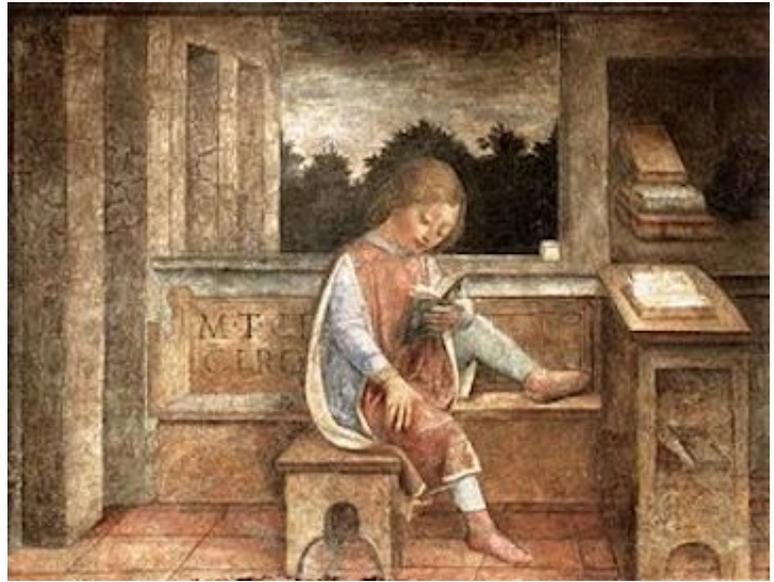
Instructor & Time: Jared Lee, F 8:00–8:50 a.m.



Galapagos finches from Darwin's *Journal of Researches*, 1845

HNR 219R 04 Cicero's *On Ends* (0.5)

In the last year of his life—the year before his assassination—the Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.) wrote about philosophical questions that had interested him ever since he heard, in his twenties, the lectures of the Academic skeptic Philo of Larissa and his dissenting pupil, Antiochus of Ascalon. In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (*On the Ends of Goods and Evils*), Cicero discusses the prominent ethical theories of his day, theories that centered on the question of what it means to live well. The Epicureans held that the goal was to live pleasantly, but Cicero doubted if their theory gave proper place to virtue and friendship. The Stoics held that the goal was to live virtuously, but Cicero questioned their refusal to call “good” some of the other things that people seem naturally to pursue, such as health, social status, and property. Some Platonists were willing to call such things “good” while holding that living virtuously was by itself enough to make one happy, but Cicero wondered if it makes any sense to say that the virtuous and rich person is happier than the virtuous and poor one. As characters in his dialogues, Cicero’s friends explain their preferred theories before being subjected to Cicero’s withering criticisms. As readers, we are invited to reassess the value of what we pursue and to construct more thoughtfully our own views of what makes life worth living.



Vincenzo Foppa, *The Young Cicero Reading*, c.1464

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, W 8:00–8:50 a.m.

SPRING 2023 BLOCK 2 (MARCH 9–MAY 11)

HNR 219R 05 The Apostolic Fathers (0.5)

What did the earliest followers of Jesus believe in the first generations following the events described in the Gospels? What distinguished these believers from their Jewish contemporaries? How did these believers define their own practice and identity as followers of Jesus? While the New Testament gives us certain perspectives as answers to these questions, many other texts survive that show us the rich diversity of the early Jesus movement. The Apostolic Fathers collection includes some of the earliest surviving missionary letters, a martyrdom account, several sermons, visions, apocalypses, and a church handbook, all from the followers of Jesus dating between 60–200 CE. Together we will discuss the implications of these texts, what they reveal about the earliest followers of Jesus, how their beliefs relate to the New Testament, and what it all means for our understanding of the beginnings of Christianity.

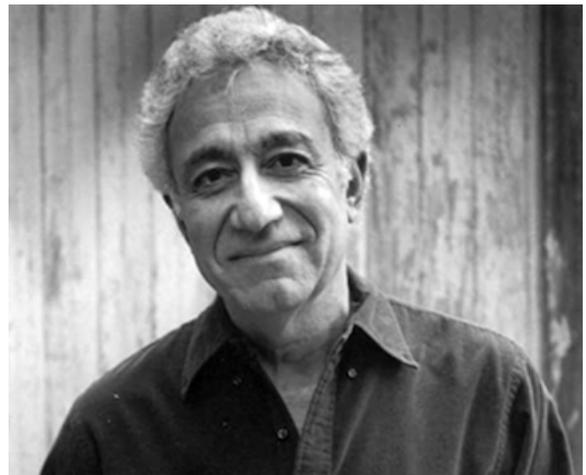


Fragment of the *Didache*, an early church handbook

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

HNR 219R 06 Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* (0.5)

Mike Rose's 1989 work *Lives on the Boundary* changed modern American education as we know it. Growing up bi-lingual in one of Los Angeles's poorest neighborhoods, Rose was inexplicably placed into a special education program because he "talked funny." He went on to earn a Ph.D. and become a widely celebrated professor at Stanford. His largely autobiographical work traces Rose's own educational journey and documents the struggles of many whose lives are, indeed, on the border of success and a cycle of poverty. We will discuss Rose's story and its ramifications on our society, schools, families, and individual educational journeys.



Mike Rose (1944–2021); Image: UCLA

Instructor & Time: Joseph Bouchelle, W 9:00–9:50 a.m.

HNR 219R 07 Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop (0.5)

Elizabeth Bishop, an important although somewhat lesser-known American poet of the 20th century, wrote frequently about the themes of loss, displacement, and loneliness. She is known for the preciseness and beauty of her descriptions as well as the haunting ideas in her words. In fact, the beauty of her descriptions is often at odds with her melancholy themes, and it's exactly that dissonance that makes her poetry so incredibly interesting and complex. We will read and analyze a selection of her poems, studying the stylistic components and fascinating themes.



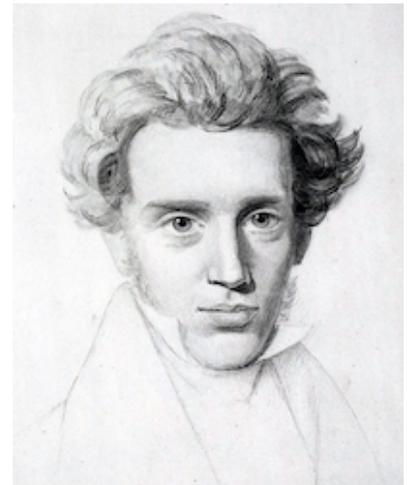
Elizabeth Bishop, Brazil, 1954

Image: Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library

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

HNR 219R 08 Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (0.5)

In 1843, Søren Kierkegaard published *Fear and Trembling*, a meditation on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Issac in response to a commandment of God. Deeply influenced by the writings of philosopher Plato and theologian Martin Luther, Kierkegaard writes about the conflict that can arise between an individual's singular relationship to God and the shared ethics of their society. Many regard Kierkegaard as the "father of existentialism," a philosophical movement that emphasizes that there is no fixed human nature. Instead, each individual is shaped by their own free, authentic choices. We will compare Kierkegaard's understanding of Abraham's faith (as isolating, anxiety-ridden, and rationally absurd) to other readings of the story we may be familiar with and consider how Kierkegaard's insights about faith might help deepen our own.



Sketch of Kierkegaard by his cousin Niels Christian Kierkegaard, c.1840

Instructor & Time: Kaija Mortensen, visiting from Randolph College, W 2:30–3:20 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.

SPRING 2023 SEMESTER (JAN. 18–MAY 11)

HNR 395R 01 Science and Religion (3)

How have historical and contemporary advances in science forced us to reconsider the relationship between science and religion? How do science and religion benefit and discredit each other? As we address these questions, we will discuss evolutionary theory, cosmology, arguments for God's existence, the history of science, and contemporary moral issues like gene editing. We'll read from many authors and texts, including Aristotle, Einstein, the Bible, Richard Dawkins, Isaac Newton, and Charles Darwin. In class, we'll focus on discussing together. If you're interested in how God, revelation, science, and the modern world can both clash and harmonize, then this course is for you. Cross-listed with BIO 375R and PHI 325R.

Instructors & Time: Bryce Gessell & Jared Lee, MWF 1:30–2:20 p.m.



Cristiano Banti, *Galileo Facing the Roman Inquisition*, 1857

HNR 395R 02 Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism (3)

Why do some people identify as members of a nation more than as members of the human race as a whole? Why do some people think that their nation is superior to other nations? Is there any philosophical justification for favoring one's own nation over other nations, or is such favoritism just a fact of human psychology? We will consider arguments for and against both nationalism and an alternative view, cosmopolitanism, which holds that human beings are "citizens of the world" first and only secondarily citizens of a particular nation. We will use ideas from philosophy, political science, and scripture to reflect upon the nature and value of national allegiance. Cross-listed with PHI 345R and POL 335R.

Instructors & Time: John Armstrong & Jeremiah John, TR 2:00–3:15 p.m.



Nazi Party Rally in Nuremberg, Germany, 1930s

Thesis

SPRING 2023 SEMESTER (JAN. 18–MAY 11)

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.

