

Spring 2024 Honors Courses



Focus Courses

An honors focus course (HNR 219R) is a discussion-based course on a work or artist of 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 2024 BLOCK 1 (JAN. 10–FEB. 28)

HNR 219R 01 Tatum’s *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (.5)

Beverly D. Tatum is the former president of Spelman College. In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations About Race*, she examines the origins of race relations and racial bias in the United States. Her book will prompt us to have deep and possibly uncomfortable conversations about race and bias in today’s society.

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

HNR 219R 02 Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (.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, M 8:00–8:50 a.m.

HNR 219R 03 Herbert’s *The Temple* (.5)

On his deathbed in 1633, the country priest George Herbert sent a “little Booke” of poems to his influential friend with the instruction to either publish it or burn it. The book, Herbert said, was “a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul.” Herbert’s friend published it, and the book has since become the most influential collection of devotional poetry in English. Reading Herbert’s *The Temple* provides us with a better understanding of traditional poetic forms, reformed religion, and, most interestingly, what it means to cultivate a spiritual relationship with a God that can be simultaneously distant, close, loving, and just.”

Instructor & Time: James Lambert, M 3:30–4:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 04 Confucius's *Analects* (.5)

Confucius (551–479 B.C.) is one of the most influential thinkers of all time. The *Analects* is a collection of his sayings and those of his students. It shows their efforts to create harmonious societies of virtuous rulers and citizens. Readers of the *Analects* have found inspiration and guidance for their own lives for thousands of years. The People's Republic of China has emerged as one of the two most powerful nations on earth. Its president, Xi Jinping, has encouraged its citizens to study Confucius's teachings. Discussing the *Analects* not only helps us reflect on what is important in life; it also helps us understand one of the world's major culture.

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, T 5:00–5:50 p.m.

SPRING 2024 BLOCK 2 (FEB. 29–MAY 2)

HNR 219R 05 Essays of bell hooks (.5)

bell hooks, a prolific poet, critic, memoirist, and essay writer, is known for the honest and insightful way she addresses race, class, love, education, gender, sexuality, and intersectionality in her works. A respected academic and self-described black queer feminist, hooks chose to write in an accessible, conversational style about complex and sometimes uncomfortable topics as a reflection of her own beliefs and values. hooks invites her readers into a conversation—all readers—regardless of background. hooks once said of herself, “If ... asked to define myself, I wouldn't start with race; I wouldn't start with blackness; I wouldn't start with gender; I wouldn't start with feminism. I would start with stripping down to what fundamentally informs my life, which is that I'm a seeker on the path. I think of feminism, and I think of anti-racist struggles as part of it. But where I stand spiritually is, steadfastly, on a path about love.”

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

HNR 219R 06 Writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (.5)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was a 17th poet, essayist, and playwright, who also happened to be a nun, in the region that is today known as Mexico. She has come to be known as “The Tenth Muse” and “The Phoenix of América.” Her writings, which are classified as Baroque, include complex metaphors and focus on both religious and secular themes. We will read samples of Sor Juana's poetry, essays, and theater plays and discuss important themes such as gender, education, philosophy, and theology. Our questions will include How do the indigenous religions of the New World prefigure the arrival of Christianity? What do the story of Christ and the myth of Narcissus have in common? What are the roles of gender in society, and how are they determined?

Instructor & Time: Iana Konstantinova, M 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 07 Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (.5)

Adam Smith (1723–1790), a major thinker of the Scottish Enlightenment, is often called the father of modern economics because of his influential discussions of the division of labor, productivity, free markets, and related topics in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. We will

discuss Smith's views on the nature and causes of wealth, compare and contrast them with the views of other thinkers, and consider what Smith's 250-year-old words can still teach us today.

Instructor & Time: Zebulen Riley, T 2:00–2:50 p.m.

HNR 219R 08 Augustine's *Confessions* (.5)

"Lord, make me chaste—but not yet!" Augustine's famous prayer, recorded in Book Eight of his *Confessions*, captures the pitched battle between holiness and sin that sears his soul and that runs throughout the work, one of the most influential of late antiquity. Part spiritual autobiography and part theological treatise, Augustine's *Confessions* is both a founding text of Christian thought and a remarkable exploration of the spiritual self that continues to inspire pilgrims—wayward or otherwise—to this day.

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

HNR 219R 09 Sermons of Brigham Young (.5)

Brigham Young, the second president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is known for many things: polygamy, mass emigration, and a priesthood ban, to name just a few. One thing he isn't known for, however, is theology. Yet, across decades of sermons, Young laid out a complex theological system, built on the teachings of Joseph Smith, that grew to include doctrines like universal salvation and cycles of resurrection. We'll read some of his most important sermons and grapple with Young's ideas in their original context and our own time.

Instructor & Time: Bryce Gessell, T 4:30–5:20 p.m.

Honors 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: junior or senior class standing. Sophomores with appropriate background studies will be considered.

SPRING 2024 SEMESTER (JAN. 10–MAY 2)

HNR 395R 01 Early Modern Female Thinkers (3)

The early modern period was the first time in European history that female authors began to flourish. They wrote on topics as varied as education, physics, children, and government. Starting with major female authors from around 1600, we'll study many traditions and genres, focusing on literature and philosophy. We'll learn how changing societal conditions gave rise to the earliest large body of women's literature and how these authors changed their traditions by adding a female perspective. Cross-listed with PHI 365R and ENG 375R.

Instructors & Time: Bryce Gessell & Ariel Silver, MWF 12:30–1:20 p.m.

HNR 395R 03 Aristotle on Tragedy (3)

Why is a play about a man who unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother one of Aristotle's favorites? Why did Aristotle say that poetry is more philosophical than history? Why didn't Aristotle adopt Plato's deep suspicion of storytellers? In the *Poetics*, a short collection of lectures on tragedy, Aristotle applies his extensive knowledge of ancient Greek epic, tragic, and comedic poetry and his incisive intellect to the question of what separates good theatre from bad, delivering aesthetic criteria praised even today by screenwriters like Aaron Sorkin and David Mamet. We shall study Aristotle's principles of theatre criticism in the *Poetics* and relevant parts of his ethical and political works to a dozen tragedies by three great tragedians of classical Athens: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Cross-listed with PHI 355R, ENG 375R, and THE 375R.

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, MW 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Honors Thesis

SPRING 2024 SEMESTER (JAN. 10–MAY 2)

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.

