

# Honors First Year Seminars, Fall 2024

## Archaeology as Storytelling (23808)

Norman, Lauren *M 12:30-01:45 PM*

Robust stories of the past draw on multiple disciplines, from genetics to history, geophysics to linguistics. How we go about studying the past through the material culture people left behind is where archaeology intersects with these disparate disciplines to image the past. Over the semester, we will investigate how archaeologists create stories about the past by visiting labs, classrooms, and archaeological sites around Lawrence. Examining how, why, and who constructed past stories from material remains allows us to highlight unconscious biases in popular archaeological tales and begin re-telling these stories to achieve a more holistic narrative.

## Can We Consume Our Way to a Better World? (15983)

Brown, J. Christopher *w 09:00-09:50 AM*

We're all consumers. We can't help it. We're animals, after all, and we need to eat and have access to water and shelter, so we consume stuff—that ultimately comes from the earth—to meet those basic needs. Ads bombard us every day telling us that consuming this or that will help solve this or that problem ABOUT our current consumption. Eat less meat and it will lead to less \_\_\_\_\_. Buy this type of plastic so that \_\_\_\_\_. Buy an electric vehicle so that \_\_\_\_\_. If we follow what the ads tell us, will the world really be “better”? To answer that, we need to figure out ways to know what our impact on the world is—on the earth and each other—when we consume, and then we also need some ways to think about what we mean by a “better” world. Take this seminar if you want to learn how natural science, social science, and humanities approaches are all needed to answer questions about sustainability.

## Climate Change Literature (27749)

Brox, Ali *Tu 02:00-02:50 PM*

Climate change presents a contemporary crisis that literature, broadly defined, increasingly grapples with — so much so that scholars now refer to “cli-fi,” or literature that examines the impacts of human-caused climate change during the Anthropocene. These impacts will be experienced disproportionately, and the social inequalities that will continue to ensue raise questions about justice and responsibility. In this class, we will examine fiction, nonfiction, and films that offer global perspectives on the climate crisis. We will address debates surrounding

ethical human/nonhuman interactions and will reflect on the social and geopolitical conflicts that are heightened by climate change.

## Computers Demystified (19028)

Kulkarni, Prasad *F 10:00-10:50 AM*

Computers are all around us, from laptops, tablets, phones and watches to refrigerators, microwaves, and cars. This seminar will introduce students to the basics of computer technologies, demystify popular computer terminologies, study everyday computer applications and their societal impact. Example modules include the history of computing, computer hardware, software, networking and Internet technologies, artificial intelligence and machine learning, cloud computing, blockchain and digital currencies, and other contemporary topics. No coding and no expectation of prior computer and coding background or knowledge.

## The Creative Mindset (18145)

Kumin, Meg *W 12:00-12:50 PM*

Our world is filled problems to be solved, perplexities to be understood, and unknowns to be discovered. While domain knowledge is critical for progress in any given field, it is creativity that's at the heart of some of the greatest discoveries and innovations. It is a crucial skill in today's changing world, from saving our planet, to fighting injustice, and to finding cures. Everyone has a creative potential. Research shows that creativity can be taught, practiced, and cultivated. This class provides a dedicated space for cognitive freedom, creative exploration, and transformative learning - a recess break for the mind. Students will be required to challenge assumptions, to take risks, to fail, to barter, to imagine, to prototype, to improvise, and to dream. Students will gain a toolkit of techniques that will scaffold their mind for future creative potential and a world of adjacent possibilities.

## Culture and Science Fiction (27810)

Casavant, Michele *W 02:00-02:50 PM*

By examining science fiction this course will help you become more critically aware of the society and culture in which you live. Through analyzing popular culture, such as film and television, you will gain a better understanding of certain ideologies and beliefs that are experienced and expressed by many Americans. We will try to answer the basic question: Where does science fiction suggestion we are heading? As it creates a future world, what does it tell us about our current situation, our current cultural anxieties, and common inequities? Is a

utopian or dystopian world created? Are these worlds truly futuristic, or heavily reliant on contemporary beliefs or stereotypes?

## Culture Out of Bounds (19052)

Rosenthal, Benjamin *M 12:00-01:15 PM*

This course will examine and locate possibilities for what can happen when the institutional boundaries of the museum and gallery get discarded and/or pushed against, and new forms of creative practice rise to the surface. Together we will theorize the nature of the “institution” and open up such strategies as guerrilla forms of intervention, site-specific public installation, the body as venue, the web as responsive and artificially intelligent venue, the rewriting of history as creative act, and the establishment of radical forms of making and showing.

## Cultural Crossroads: Palestine/Israel (27756)

Zeedan, Rami *M 03:00-04:15 PM*

This seminar provides an in-depth examination of the cultural crossroads in Palestine and Israel. We will focus on historical and religious sites in Israel and Palestine as case studies while exploring their significance, symbolism, and impact on the region's culture, identity, and conflicts. Through interdisciplinary approaches, students will analyze the religious narratives, historical contexts, and contemporary implications associated with these sites, fostering critical thinking and dialogue. We will include various social groups: Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze, and Bahai. Examples of sites of interest are in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, The Dead Sea, Haifa, and Hittin.

## The Death of Socrates (27755)

Touyz, Paul *Th 01:00-01:50 PM*

In this course we will explore historical, political, and philosophical aspects of the trial and execution of Socrates, as well as the lasting influence of his death up to the present. Today, Socrates is regularly presented as the father of philosophy and the champion of free inquiry and speech. His trial and execution by the democracy of Athens is often framed, therefore, as a violent attempt to suppress free thought. We will try to situate Socrates' death at a moment of bloody and revolutionary upheaval and consider what we can take away today from the events of more than 2000 years ago about pressing topics including free speech, political partisanship, celebrity, social control, and moral accountability.

## Drawing on Experience (17136)

Patterson, Anne *Tu 01:00-02:15 PM*

Through readings, simple drawings, and collage we will see the world anew: learning how to visualize what we read, what we see, and what we imagine. The course will begin with reading 'Invisible Cities', the classic collection of essays by Italo Calvino as a way of seeing cities through a different lens and continue through exploring the ubiquitous world of drawing and collage. We'll be trying to understand and reveal the relationship between words and images through a series of writing and drawing assignments.

## Ecology, Disability, Sustainability (27757)

Pence, Ray *M 03:00-03:50 PM*

The seminar brings together two major concerns that warrant greater attention as a joint focus in public discourse. The first is disability and wellbeing of disabled people. The second is climate crisis and wellbeing of the planet. Both are increasingly urgent topics for scholarly inquiry, social action, and political debate. Young people are central to such activities because of their commitments to better futures. I believe the KU Honors program cultivates the awareness and leadership to nourish relationships between disability and sustainability. This is why I want to offer a First-Year Seminar for exploration of these relationships and to achieve something beneficial to us all.

## Energy Policy: Be the Change (17110)

Liu, Lin *M 09:00-10:15 AM*

The objectives of this course are to inspire intellectual engagement through an investigation of an interesting and stimulating topic connected to the instructor's disciplinary expertise. Through readings, classroom discussion, excursions, and other seminar activities new Honors students have early experiences with research and develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Currently, coal, oil, and natural gas together account for the majority of global energy consumption. Global energy demand is expected to grow in the coming decades, with fossil fuels remaining the primary source. Rising world energy consumption creates political and social tensions. For example, a large fraction of current geopolitical tensions arises from issues originating in energy supply and consumption. In the meanwhile, much emphasis has been placed on climate change and environmental protection. Any change in the energy policy will inevitably ripple out with the physical world. Some of those ripple effects are enormously positive, others are not. Through this seminar, we will develop a better understanding of how the energy policy changes given new technological progress, economic growth, and development along with the rising energy demand coming from developing countries.

## Exoplanets: Worlds Beyond our Solar System (28305)

Crossfield, Ian *F 09:00-09:50 AM*

Astronomers have discovered thousands of planets beyond our solar system, and we are on a path to discovering and exploring worlds resembling Earth and answering the question: “Are we alone?” The task is immense, and consists of finding new planets, studying them in detail, and (for the most Earth-like) searching for signatures of life. Students in this class will learn about modern astrometry, the hunt for other worlds, and will examine real data to find new exoplanets.

## Exploring Disney's World (23417)

Meyertholen, Andrea *F 01:00-01:50 PM*

Most of us have always known and loved the worlds of Walt Disney having grown up with its characters, their stories, and their songs. Yet seldom do we think deeply about Disney despite its influence on myriad facets of daily life from childhood to adulthood in American culture and beyond. This seminar explores the wonderful and not-so-wonderful world of Disney through its movies, controversies, and cultural impact to analyze how Disney transformed the written fairytale into animated films and built an entire industry of theme parks and merchandizing. We examine representations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability on screen and behind the scenes at Disney parks; consider Disney’s self-presentation and preservation of its images; and learn how Disney transforms the characters, values, and fantasies promised by its films into the lived environments of its theme parks. In short, we discover how fairytales come to life and dreams come true.

## Global Citizenship and the Ethics of Travel (23786)

Swartz, Harrison *Tu 03:00-03:50 PM*

Travel has the power to enrich our lives, broaden our horizons, make us question our worldviews, and demonstrate both the diversity and commonality of cultures. At the same time, the multitrillion-dollar global tourism industry has the capacity to change the traditional character of communities, drive up cost of living for locals, harm the environment and promote neocolonialism. How do we reconcile these two sides of the coin? How can we explore our world in an ethical manner? This course will confront the inherent tensions in global travel and encourage critical thinking about positionality and impact, while also introducing students to on-campus resources dedicated to help them engage with cultures both within and beyond our borders.

## Higher Education and Democracy (27751)

Kokobobo, Ani *w 02:00-02:50 PM*

In this seminar we consider the role of higher education in fostering democracy, in the United States and abroad. We will consider different aspects of higher education that are intended to foster democracy and consider questions such as: academic freedom and its meaning for faculty and students; how the liberal arts education fosters independent thinking; how shared governance functions in universities and how its premise of checks and balances has contributed to the success of American higher education; how scholarly analysis can combat disinformation in public discourse. We will conclude with discussion of international case studies (in Russia, Montenegro and beyond) where threats to higher education come with threats to democracy at large.

## HortiCULTural: People + Plants (27748)

Braun, Preston *Th 04:00-04:50 PM*

Have we paved paradise and put up a parking lot? HortiCULTural starts by examining the phenomenon behind the “American Yard”, and the lasting influences it has had on lawn culture as well as the ways we view gardens and parks. The course further encourages students to explore how plants influence the human identity, creating a unique culture that can focus on becoming more in-tune with natural surroundings and the health benefits that plants bring. Finally, the course looks towards the future and imagines a world that allies itself with nature through targeted initiatives.

## Humor from Margins French Lit (17099)

Hayes, Bruce *w 09:30-10:45 AM*

As recent examples such as Dave Chappelle’s Netflix special, “The Closer” illustrate, humor can be divisive and offensive. Debates surrounding comedy and humor point to underlying cultural assumptions and values. Using theories on humor to help guide our discussions, this seminar will take a deep dive into French humor and comedy from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This will allow students to compare their own values and cultural assumptions with those from another country and from a different historical period. An important question we will examine is the following: What is it about humor that rankles and disturbs, troubles and problematizes (or pokes fun at) the status quo? What is it about humor that can leave people feeling uncomfortable? These and other questions will inform our discussions throughout the seminar.

## Inside Museums (18758)

Straughn, Celka *F 11:00-11:50 AM*

Museums are considered trusted cultural institutions. Why, and perhaps why not? This course will look beyond surface displays and into the “cracks” to examine some of the ways museums function and for what purposes. We will also explore some of the ways those inside, outside, and at the thresholds of museums can open up museums as civic spaces for building community. Class sessions will include site visits to campus museums and other cultural organizations.

## Lawrence as a Livability Lab (23576)

Lyles, Ward *W 10:00-10:50 AM*

What makes a place livable? This seminar will use Lawrence as a laboratory to explore answers to this question. We will learn about local businesses, educational institutions, government programs, and non-profit organizations working to enhance the experience of getting familiar with your new community. We'll have opportunities to experience books, beverages, bike trails, baked goods, birding spots, bands, and more, in addition to good company. Our local explorations will help us understand how to create communities that are compassionate, equitable, and sustainable.

## Mindfulness in Modern World (19792)

Chen, Yvonne *M 02:00-02:50 PM*

Have you ever craved a quiet space to simply breathe and regroup? Have you felt a constant struggle toward our society's addiction to faster living? Have you ever wondered what mindfulness is and how it becomes so popular?

But what is mindfulness? Does it really work? How is “mindfulness” popularized in our society and in the mainstream media? This seminar places mindfulness in the crux of these questions and examines its role in our lives. It approaches mindfulness from diverse disciplinary perspectives, including neuroscience, media, health, art, and religious studies through in-class activities and hands-on practices.

This seminar is for students who are curious about mindfulness and are interested in integrating it into their ever-evolving human experiences. I am excited to embark on this journey with you and hope you are too!

## Mixed-up (27747)

Boskovic, Zarko *F 10:00-10:50 AM*

World seen as a mixture. Begins with ancient methods of separation like winnowing and threshing, squeezing out, blowing out (maybe fishing and hunting and gathering). The point is to take advantage of different properties to achieve separations and enrichment. This all foreshadows analytical chemistry and modern separation science (counting and sorting). This is followed by separation of light components into different colors and related concepts to light as a mixture (spectroscopy, Sun as a renewable energy source, etc.). There are also genetic mixtures that are a consequence of sexual reproduction. Music as a mixture of frequencies. Finally, we reach the mathematical separations. "Demixing" through math. Getting pure components through linear algebra and getting to the data.

## Monsters 101 (18140)

Scott, Paul *W 02:00-03:15 PM*

Monsters are part of the fabric of our lives. There is no culture, tribe, or society without its monsters. This class delves into the notion of monstrosity and what constitutes a monster, looking at imagined monsters (horror), fictionalized versions of human monsters (the serial killer and Mafia boss), supernatural monsters (zombies), and possible monsters (extraterrestrials) across a range of media (TV, movies, literature). Particular emphasis will be paid to the deep subversive potential of monsters to challenge the status quo and prevailing attitudes to gender, sexuality, and authority. As well, we'll discuss the differences and convergences to be found between different cultures. We will analyze some recent reconfigurations of monsters, such as rational zombies, sympathetic serial killers, and friendly aliens, and unpack their meanings. Another important factor will be the consideration of what is humanity, what defines humanness, and why monsters matter.

## Nuclear Chemistry in the Modern Society: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (20861)

Barybin, Mikhail *M 03:00-03:50 PM*

Think about stereotypical public perceptions of the word "chemical" and the word "nuclear"... Have these terms slipped into the "dirty word" lexicon of our society? Does combining the two "evils" (i.e., NUCLEAR CHEMICALS) magnify the fear? In this seminar, we will examine the historic origins of chemo- and nuclear phobias with the initial goal of uncovering what fuels bad press and sensational headlines. While objectively acknowledging The Bad and The Ugly, we will try to reclaim The Good meaning of both words. In addition to all the nerdy science behind Nuclear Chemistry, among the topics discussed will be "The Radium Girls," residential radon and



radon spas (mines), chemical and nuclear warfare, carbon dating, the future of nuclear energy, as well as fundamentals of modern diagnostic imaging and nuclear medicine. The students will debate geopolitical, socioeconomic, environmental, human health, and a few other implications of Nuclear Chemistry.

### Propaganda 101 (23626)

Kretsinger-Harries, Anne *W 03:00-03:50 PM*

In this seminar, students will explore the history of propaganda and mass persuasion and learn to analyze the public messages they encounter in their daily lives. We will consider historical and contemporary examples from the worlds of advertising, entertainment, politics, war, social movements, and popular culture. We will also examine propaganda and mass persuasion on campus, including a visit to the Spencer Museum of Art.

### Race, Memory, and Storytelling in American History (27753)

Tell, Dave *W 04:00-04:50 PM*

This seminar will focus on the role of storytelling and cultural memory in shaping America's racial history.

### Secrets of Conspiracy Theories (27816)

McRoberts, Colin *F 01:00-01:50 PM*

This course examines the culture of conspiracy theories in the United States: why otherwise reasonable people fall for them, the harm (and occasionally the good) that they do, and how individuals and society might be able to push back against their spread. The course begins with a survey of historical and contemporary conspiracy theories, such as Flat Earth, QAnon, anti-vaccine hysteria, and the rise and fall of Alex Jones. Students will then examine leading theories about how people become ensnared in false and failing beliefs, drawing from experts in psychology, communications, and behavioral economics. Finally, students will explore and criticize various models for responding to the spread of conspiracy theories, from individual approaches based on negotiation techniques to large-scale societal strategies, and propose their own approaches as a final project.

### Slavery Narratives in Americas (23711)

De Andrade Tosta, Antonio *W 01:00-01:50 PM*

The enslavement of Africans and their descendants marked a tragic period of the shared history of the Americas. Slavery and its aftermath remain a significant topic of discussion for the understanding of current race relations, economics, and politics throughout the hemisphere. Informed by historical, anthropological, and cultural studies readings, this course will look at selected films and novels from different American countries to discuss the varied ways in which history is portrayed in them, as well as to identify how they inform us about the past and present.

### So, You Want to Be a Writer, Huh? (15969)

Klayder, Mary *W 04:30-05:20 PM*

Students will engage in three genres of creative writing: fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. For each genre, a specialist in the area will introduce the genre, then students will write and participate in workshops with other members of the class and with an honors seminar assistant in each workshop group. They will also visit readings here on campus and in Lawrence and read professional samples of the genres they write. The hope is that they understand the relationship of the genres within creative writing.

### Society at Play(station) (17708)

Gullickson, Sean *W 02:00-02:50 PM*

Some 226.6 million people in the United States regularly play video games. That's over two thirds of the population. Internationally, approximately 2.77 billion people are "gamers" of one sort or another. Video games themselves continue to be divisive, with detractors calling them escapism at best and promoting violence and hate at worst, while advocates see video games as valuable cultural products and the next frontier in storytelling. This honors seminar will explore the many cultural facets of video games with the aim of better understanding their role in our society and what it means to be a "gamer." We will look at the cultural phenomena of Fortnite and "gamergate," explore open worlds and virtual sandboxes, read games as narratives and see how they measure up with more traditional media, discuss the ways in which games can both divide and unite us, and more.

### The Sociology of Taylor Swift (17980)

Donovan, Brian *M 11:00-11:50 AM*

This seminar uses the life and career of Taylor Swift as a mirrorball to reflect on large-scale processes like the culture industry, celebrity, and fandom, and the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary American life. We will explore several core topics within cultural

sociology including the construction of authenticity, symbolic boundaries and gatekeeping, fandom and fan labor, and celebrity politics. We will also use recent controversies and legal conflicts involving Swift to examine questions about intellectual property, copyright, and the economics of creative industries. This seminar is organized into thirteen topic areas that roughly match Swift's career from a breakout country music superstar to her 2023 Eras Tour.

## #StickToSports: Politics and Sport (23415)

Gomez Montoya, Mauricio *Th 03:00-03:50 PM*

This class will be a critical analysis on the impact of sports in society, particularly viewing sports as a political venue. Through dialogue, the class will analyze themes such as race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, among other political identities, through the lens of sport. The class is titled #StickToSports: Politics & Sport in honor of the infamous hashtag telling athletes to be silent on their political opinions and simply play to entertain. This class will critically analyze themes related to social identity, power, privilege, and oppression.

## Student Protest & The University (27750)

Chappell, Benjamin *Tu 10:00-10:50 AM*

Higher education today is a contested institution. Part of the population views universities as sites of "liberal indoctrination," while another sees them as taking up difficult but essential conversations. Such debates seem to turn on the question of what the purpose and design of universities was originally. But this neglects how higher education has historically adapted and been transformed in response to demands and challenges from the public. Students have often been at the forefront of these changes, through the medium of protest. This course surveys the history of student protest as a key factor in shaping the social function of universities today. Focusing on the 20th century, but touching also on the present, we will examine examples of student protest around questions of access for excluded populations, curriculum reform, free speech and anti-war movements, international solidarity and divestment, campus policing, student debt, and other topics.

## Success, Failure, & Science (19029)

Blakemore, James *W 01:00-01:50 PM*

This course will survey selected scientific and technological breakthroughs that have shaped our modern world, considering the advancements themselves and their sometimes unintended environmental, political, or personal consequences. Focus topics could include plastics, energy technologies, commercial aircraft, etc. We will draw on knowledge from fields beyond science,

however, in order to showcase interdisciplinary perspectives on success and failure in human endeavors. In-class discussions and opportunities for personal reflection will serve as a platform for students to formulate their own definitions of success and failure. In this context, our class goal will be to inspire creativity and foster innovative thinking as students embark on their unique university journeys.

## Technology and the Cold War (15992)

Camarda, Kyle *Tu 11:00-11:50 AM*

This seminar will discuss how technological advancements drove the geopolitical crises that defined the Cold War. From spy planes to mass communication systems, different technologies affected nearly every decision made by the superpowers. We will discuss how access to technology changes the way governments, companies and individuals behave in the context of a global conflict.

## Understanding Kansas through its Mexican and Chicax History/Stories (27827)

Masterson, Araceli *W 02:00-02:50 PM*

In this specific section of HONRS190, students will learn about U.S. Latinx histories, and specifically about Kansas Mexican and Chicano histories. Some of the underlying questions of this course include: How do we construct the historical subject? Who inhabits our cities and towns? What are the processes influencing the ability of a variety of subjects to be perceived as makers of the history of the places where they live and work? Why is cultural expression key to unveil the histories of those who make up our communities? Understanding our local history demands a larger reflection on the interrelation between social hierarchies of class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, and access to space at a variety of scales (national, state, local).

## Virtuality is Reality (18147)

Dastmalchi, Mohammad Reza *Tu 02:00-03:15 PM*

The seminar will immerse students into the world of Virtual Reality (VR), and allows them to explore different VR apps in entertainment and education through a series of hands-on activities. One of the primary focuses of this seminar is to teach about the strengths, challenges, and the use cases of this technology in different disciplines. Through a blend of theoretical insights and practical experiences, students will delve into the critical aspects of VR app design and development, understand its role in creative integration, and harness VR as a powerful tool

for education and entertainment. Engaging with professionals from the industry and collaborating on projects, students will not only gain a deep understanding of VR but also develop a prototype tailored for gaming or educational purposes, embodying the seminar's commitment to active learning and innovation.

## Who is a Refugee? (19027)

Janzen, Marike *w 11:00-11:50 AM*

This seminar will examine the causes, consequences, and implications of the record high number of displaced persons in the world. Our investigation will center on multiple facets of the question: Who is a refugee? That is, who are the people we call refugees? Where do they come from? What is the legal definition of the category of "refugee," and why does it matter? How do we, and how should we, depict the experiences of refugees when leaders around the world are working to make it more difficult, and dangerous, for people to cross national borders?