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UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

# Honors College

*Course Descriptions*  
Spring 2025

## ***The Honors College Spring 2025 course descriptions packet includes:***

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### ***HONORS 101 First-Year Seminars for Spring 2025***

#### **Honors 101 (1): Lyricism (#6885)**

**MW 4:00 - 5:15pm**

***Jason Roush, Honors College***

What makes song lyrics poetic & lyrical? Where exactly do songwriting & poetry intersect? We'll consider these deep & intricate questions to plumb the depths of the mysteries & rewards of music & music-making, as well as the pleasures of simply listening to music, while also analyzing, critiquing & enjoying a wide array of well-crafted songs.

Readings from two excellent (& also quite fun) critical texts will guide our analyses of individual song selections: *Equipment for Living: On Poetry and Pop Music* by Michael Robbins (Simon & Schuster, 2017) & *The Poetry of Pop* by Adam Bradley (Yale University Press, 2017). Brief excerpts from the books are provided during class to illuminate lyrics & structures of certain songs. Our analyses of songs will consider lyrical & poetic devices such as: rhyme, metrical patterns, anaphora/repetition, consonance & assonance, metaphor & simile, innovations surrounding the traditional verse/chorus/bridge/refrain structure of popular songs, etc.

*No experience with songwriting, song analysis, nor poetry is required for this course!* We will learn together throughout the term. Some artists whose songs & lyrics we'll explore include: Tori Amos, Kate Bush, Tracy Chapman, Cocteau Twins, Lana Del Rey, Ani DiFranco, Eminem, Patty Griffin, Michael Jackson, Rickie Lee Jones, Nik Kershaw, Cyndi Lauper, Joni Mitchell, Prince, Bruce Springsteen, & Taylor Swift. Each student will present in class on at least 1-2 songs by any artist(s) of their own choosing, to help diversify our listening throughout the course.

Assignments include short written responses (1-2 pages), 1-2 song presentations during class & active engagement via our listening exercises (if you're more of just a listener than a speaker, that's totally fine, too). Mainly, this course will focus on critical appreciation & fun, while deepening your engagement with the art of music & lyricism.

#### **Honors 101 (2): Unequal Colleagues: A History of Women in the Sciences (#6886)**

**MWF 1:00 - 1:50pm**

***Lynne Byall Benson, Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies***

According to historian Margaret Rossiter, "(A) woman scientist was a contradiction in terms—such a person was unlikely to exist, and if she did..., she had to be "unnatural" in some way... Women scientists were thus caught between two almost mutually exclusive stereotypes: as scientists they were atypical women; as women they were unusual scientists" (Rossiter, Margaret W.; *Women Scientists in America. Struggles and Strategies to 1940*. (1982: xv).

This course examines, from a feminist perspective, the history of women's struggle to attain entry in the male-dominated field of the so-called "hard" sciences in the United States; among them those fields referred to at STEM: Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Special attention will be paid to the connections between society's assumptions regarding the purpose of women's education, and societal barriers, including race, faced by women who aspired to careers in scientific fields. Seminar participants read, discuss, debate, and make up their own minds on these issues. *This course can count toward a major or minor in Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies and can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.*

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**Honors 101 (3): The Scandalized Subject: A Story of the Self in Literature, Film, and Theory (#7543)****MWF 2:00 - 2:50pm****Christopher Craig, English**

While artistic, philosophical, and religious examinations of the Self have developed over the centuries, ranging from the mythological to the theoretical, the quest to interpret the Self remains. This course considers a number of artistic and theoretical approaches to the Self through a variety of literary and visual texts from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to our own historical moment. It examines how the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves position the Self against its dialectical Other—often the monsters we imagine or the technological monstrosities we create—in order to substantiate and at times deny our own existence.

In this this course, I assign four novels, three films, and five to seven theoretical essays. Weekly student participation is required, along with two formal presentations. Students will also write three essays. Essays one and two will range from 750 to 1,000 words in length. Essay three will include a research component and should not exceed 2,500 words. In preparation for essay three, students will submit a prospectus and bibliography.

**Honors 101 (4): Capitalism, Race, Black Writing, and Social Change (#7564)****TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm****Joseph Ramsey, English and American Studies**

African American writing offers a critical window into the fundamental workings of U.S. society. Emerging from conditions of historic oppression, black authors often make available suppressed knowledge and radical critique, freedom dreams, and reflections on collective attempts to change the world. How have the literary and political strategies of such writers evolved over time in relation to changing social conditions, as well as different waves of popular movements? What can those seeking justice and equality today learn from the texts they've left us?

In this course, students will study a range of classic African American literary works in relationship to the evolving historical conditions that helped give rise to them. Readings will extend from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present, including work by Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, and Richard Wright, as well as contemporary voices, from Cornel West, to Bryan Stevenson, Kenan Malik, Adolph Reed Jr., Cedric Johnson, Porsha Olayiwola, and Ava DuVernay. We will examine a range of critical perspectives—from black nationalism to intersectionality to Marxism and Afro-Pessimism—engaging ongoing debates about the evolving status of race, class, gender, and anti-racism in U.S. society.

As this will be a discussion-based course, rooted in student writing and reflection, students will be expected to produce a regular critical response paper (roughly 2 pages each), and to help lead class discussion. There will be two additional formal essay assignments: a short essay (1,500 words) and a final research paper (2,500 words). *This course can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.*

**Honors 101 (5): Out of the Ooze (#7735)****TuTh 9:30 - 10:45am****Steve Ackerman, Honors College**

This seminar is for all students regardless of science background. Science concepts are explained generally and convivially. We explore what led to life and humans: how our universe began (multiple hypotheses); early history of our galaxy, solar system, and Earth; prebiotics (was RNA first or protein first or lipid first or metabolism first); evidence for first life; how animals and plants had different evolutionary approaches; moving from water to land; birds are yesterday's dinosaurs; mammals; the human lineage; animals have the same number of genes and the same genes; our 8-9 million year human lineage is the product of at least 30-40 M yrs of intermixing different geographic groups. Apes originate in Asia. Their African descendants become Propliopithecus (e.g., Aegyptopithecus) (~30 M yrs), then Pliopithecus (~20 M yrs ago), then Dryopithecus (13-11 M yrs ago). An early bipedalist arises ~9-8 M yrs, and ~7 M yrs the first on the human lineage and bipedal Sahelanthropus tchadensis (Chad, Africa) / Lufengpithecus (China) appear. Orrorin (6 M yr ) may be our next ancestor, then Ardipithecus (~5 M yrs; two species), then Australopithecus (4-1 M yrs; many species), then the Homo lineage (~ 2.5 M yrs, many species from archaic to modern humans). H. erectus first left Africa, multiple times, starting ~ 2 M yrs. Archaic H. sapiens left Africa, multiple times, starting 200,000 yrs ago (or earlier), and entered Europe and Asia by 70,000 years ago, reproduced with Neandertals (Europe) and Denisovans (Asia): our genomes contain Neandertal DNA and some contain Neandertal & Denisovan DNA. We will discuss the human migrations of the past ~8000 yrs ago that further mixed human genomes. Course requirements include five writing assignments (3 response papers and 2 research papers of 3 pages / 5 pages), an oral presentation, attendance, and participation.

**Honors 101 (6): Mutagens and Carcinogens (#7926)****TuTh 12:30 - 1:45pm****Steve Ackerman, Honors College**

This seminar for science and non-science majors is an exploration of mutagens and carcinogens. Mutagens and carcinogens are chemicals, ultraviolet (UV) rays, radioactive materials, etc., causing changes to how the genetic material is expressed. We begin with a non-technical discussion of evolution and evolutionary change related to mutation, and then consider what a mutation is and the different categories of mutations that exist. We will consider why mutations occur (the Red Queen postulate, the Richard Lenski experiments, and what Neandertals and Denisovans added to our genome). We will discuss harmful chemicals in water, farm and industrial runoff contaminating water, the dangers of bottled water, the effect that plastics have on health, plastic components such as bisphenol A (“BPA”), PFAS, phthalates, concerns about canned and plastic enclosed foods, triclosan in antibacterial products, CFCs, PCBs, DDT, GMOs, agent orange, pesticides, farm raised fish, sunscreens, etc. We will discuss why chemotherapy uses mutagens for a good purpose (i.e. cancer treatment), why some disease genes may cause disease today but were beneficial to the young, how mutations can arise without changing the DNA sequence and be passed on to subsequent generations (transgenerational inheritance), etc. We will debunk the notions that high fructose corn syrup, salt, etc. are harmful. These discussions will evaluate the methodology of the research and the data. Course requirements include five writing assignments (3 response papers and 2 research papers of 3 pages / 5 pages), an oral presentation, attendance, and participation.

**Honors 101 (7): Exploring Psychological Identities in TV and Film (#8816)****TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm****Roxann Harvey, Honors College**

In our rapidly changing cultural landscape, popular movies and TV series serve as powerful mirrors reflecting societal values, norms and struggles. This course examines the psychological themes present in contemporary media, including reality television, K-Pop dramas, modern series and popular movies. Through the lens of psychological theory, we will explore the practical implications of character portrayals, emphasizing how they can inform our understanding of real-world issues such as social influence, stigma, identity formation and mental health challenges.

By critically analyzing peer-reviewed research articles and media examples such as *Bridgerton*, *Sex Education*, and *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, students will explore the intersection of psychology and culture, enhancing their ability to connect psychological theories to everyday scenarios. These analyses offer insights into how media shapes perception of self and society, providing valuable lessons on the psychological processes that govern human behavior.

This course encourages students to become more discerning consumers of popular culture, equipping them with the tools to analyze and interpret the psychological narratives embedded within entertainment. Students will gain a multifaceted understanding of how media both reflects and shapes societal and individual identities, enhancing their ability to apply psychological concepts to real-world contexts.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance and participation
- Weekly 1-page reflections on the psychological concepts discussed in class, with a focus on connecting one related peer-reviewed article to the media example.
- One 5-page paper with a minimum of 3 citations not used in class analyzing one of the weekly psychological topics.
- Final Project: Students will work in small groups to choose a popular TV show or movie not covered in class. They will create a 7–10-minute presentation that explains how psychological themes are represented in their chosen media and relate the analysis to concepts from at least three research articles and class discussions. Each group member will need to submit an individual short individual reflection of the group project describing their specific contribution and what they learned from the project.

***PLEASE NOTE: All Honors College students are required to take an above-listed HONORS 101 first-year seminar, except for those students who transferred at least 30 credits into UMass Boston at the time that they matriculated to the university.***

## **HONORS 210G Intermediate Seminars for Spring 2025**

### **Honors 210G (1): “The Personal Is Political”: Reproductive Justice on Film (#10687)**

**MWF 9:00 - 9:50am**

***Carney Maley, Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies***

The reproductive justice movement was developed by a group of Black women activists in the 1990s as a way to merge their advocacy for both reproductive rights and social justice issues. Using this intersectional framework, we will examine how ideas about reproduction have evolved in the U.S. from pre-*Roe v. Wade* to the overturning of the Supreme Court case in 2022, to today. Reproductive Justice allows us to explore not only the evolution of abortion rights, but also the right for people to have children and to parent them in a safe environment. Therefore, we will investigate topics such as maternal healthcare, foster care, LGBTQ+ family building, new reproductive technologies, sterilization, and contraception. Students will read the works of legal scholars, activists, historians, and journalists to chart how people’s reproductive decisions are shaped not only by gender identity but also race, socioeconomic class, and sexuality.

The course will also focus on how issues of reproductive justice are represented in contemporary American film. Analyzing both narrative and documentary films from the 21<sup>st</sup> century provides us with insights into how society views certain reproductive choices (i.e. what is considered socially acceptable, legal, desirable, etc.), and how these individual and structural decisions change over time. Assignments will include written analyses of contemporary documentary and narrative films and a final research project that investigates a current activist organization committed to one of the reproductive justice issues covered in the course.

*This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) distribution requirement.*

### **Honors 210G (2): Extraordinary Illusions: U.S. Cinema of the 1970s (#10688)**

**TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm**

***Linda Liu, Honors College***

This intermediate seminar explores the extraordinary array of U.S. cinema made in the 1970s, ranging from independent films renowned for their aesthetic innovation and social critiques to the unprecedented commercial success of the new Hollywood blockbusters. Created during a decade of momentous transitions between the countercultural zeitgeist of the 1960s and the conservative backlash of the 1980s, these films are products of a distinctive period when mainstream American cinema could aspire to incisive criticisms of established social institutions, power structures, and gender relations while also generating profits (e.g., *Taxi Driver*, *Nashville*, *Five Easy Pieces*). The latter half of the 70s, however, gave rise to the huge blockbusters (e.g., *Jaws*, *The Exorcist*, *Star Wars*) that went on to transform Hollywood into a franchise-dominated industry that prioritized profit over the intrinsic merit of films. With attention to film form, we will investigate the interrelations between social context and the themes, directors, genres, and styles that developed during the period. Weekly screenings of films will be accompanied by readings consisting of film criticism, industrial and cultural history, essays, journalism, and theoretical analyses. Students’ critical and interpretive capabilities will be developed through written screening responses to films, as well as two five-page papers that integrate multiple sources covered throughout the semester.

*This course fulfills the Intermediate Seminar (IS) requirement.*

## **HONORS 290-level Courses for Spring 2025**

### **Honors 291 (1): Optimism! (#8033)**

**TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm**

***Avak Hasratian, English***

In “Of the Logic of Practice, or Art; Including Morality and Policy,” John Stuart Mill writes: “I have observed that not the man who hopes when others despair, but the man who despairs when others hope, is admired by a large class of persons as a sage” (469). Pessimists and cynics, whose ideas we’ll cover, become rich and famous by motivating others through fear. To their disappointment and our delight, this course’s wager is that nothing has happened that can’t be made better. The twin mediators in such improvement are *technical innovation and artistic inspiration*. Viewed through the lens of cool reason (thinking like a Stoic) rather than hot catastrophism (acting like a politician or journalist), both can improve our responses to stressors, whether these stressors are subjectively personal or objectively affecting the planet.

There is nothing that art and innovation cannot try and do. To see how this is both possible and desirable, we'll intensively discuss masterpieces of sculpture and architecture (from glorious sports venues to gargantuan figures); read two novels that will change how we view spirituality, history, and humanity (Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* and James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird*); and view a film that shows how hope can heal us in remarkable ways (Pedro Almodóvar's *Volver* or *All About My Mother*). Down with the Doomsayers and "No" to the negative Nancys! It's right to feel good in a time when plenty is wrong. Requirements include short response papers and small group presentations on sources of inspiration.

*This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.*

**Honors 291 (2): Vocality: Speaking, Singing, and the Architecture of the Sonic Imagination (#8034)**

**MWF 11:00 - 11:50am**

**Frederick Stubbs, Performing Arts**

*Vocality* is a seminar for those who wish to exercise and explore their own voices, as individuals and in groups. We examine human phonation and articulation as the basis for both speech and music. Our aim is to encourage the expression of important thoughts and truths through Song, Speech and in Writing. We use Vocality to describe, in language and song, both the seen and the unseen worlds we humans inhabit through observation, cogitation, hopes, plans or prayers. Using Vocality as a metaphor for identity and will, when we Sing, Speak, Say or Write, we enact script and intention in the ultimate performative and political act; we stand up and be counted.

We will be listening carefully to exemplars of song and speech from many cultural contexts and exploring the texts and techniques they emphasize. We will borrow reading on subjects relevant to language, the human vocal apparatus, and vocal health, and we will read and hear musical and spoken texts from religious, historical and theatrical sources. Class members practice vocality through discourse and song, as well as regular exercises to train the voice and the ear. Our class calls for mandatory and timely attendance. Students fulfill four or five assignments calling for creative and analytic skills, engage with a research paper or project, and report to the class on at least one of these assignments.

*This course fulfills an Arts (AR) distribution requirement.*

**Honors 292 (1): Compassion: Is It Possible? (#8417)**

**TuTh 12:30 - 1:45pm**

**Yumiko Inukai, Philosophy**

Compassion is often seen as essential to human morality, but is it truly attainable? This course is an investigation into compassion, asking whether it is simply an emotion, a feeling, or something else. Central to our exploration is the concept of the self: Does the self obstruct genuine compassion? Can we transcend it to connect with others in a way that is free from self-interest? Does the nature of the self limit our capacity for true care? We will also question the existence and nature of the self, as these are key to understanding the possibility of compassion as our motivation. Readings will span various philosophical traditions, including thinkers such as Schopenhauer, Sartre, Buddhist philosophers, and contemporary scholars. Together, we will examine whether compassion is possible and how it shapes human relationships and ethical behavior. We will explore whether true compassion requires the dissolution of the self or whether it can coexist with our ego-driven motivations.

Students will be assessed through two written assignments (4-6 pages each), class participation, and a 2-person group presentation.

*This course fulfills a Humanities (HU) distribution requirement.*

**Honors 292 (2): Digital Selves: Ethics and Identity in Emerging Technologies (#10686)**

**TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm**

**Cody Turner, Philosophy**

How do emerging technologies reshape our identities and challenge traditional ethical frameworks? This course explores the complex intersections of digital technology, personal identity, and ethics in our rapidly evolving world. Students will examine how technologies like social media, artificial intelligence, virtual/augmented reality, and neurotechnology are redefining what it means to be human in the digital age. The course is divided into five main units:

- Introduction to Philosophy and the Techno-Social World
- Meta-Ethics and Normative Ethics
- Data Ethics
- Ethics of Social Media
- AI Ethics
- Future of Computing Part 1: Ethics of Augmented and Virtual Reality
- Future of Computing Part 2: Ethics of Neurotechnology and 3D Printing

Students will individually complete four interconnected "Digital Identity Projects," each focusing on a different technology and its ethical implications. At least two of these projects will combine written analysis with creative, open-ended visual or audio components, such as podcasts, digital art, or video essays. Students will synthesize insights from these projects via an in-person presentation at the end of the semester. In addition to the core digital identity projects, students will be evaluated based on attendance and participation and a semester-long group project exploring emerging technologies and potential regulatory frameworks. The course readings will focus on cutting-edge work in the philosophy of technology while also including historical texts and perspectives from various intellectual traditions beyond Western analytic philosophy."

*This course fulfills a Humanities (HU) distribution requirement and can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.*

### **Honors 293 (1): Democracy: Power to the People? (#8032)**

**MW 4:00 - 5:15pm**

**Steve McAvene, Global Governance & Human Security**

In this course we will explore the evolution of Democracy throughout history and the impact it has made on the world. Beginning with an exploration of what types of Democracy exist or have existed, we will engage with the topic from a historical and political standpoint exploring individual iterations of democracy throughout history. Along the way, we will investigate how Democracy has been defined and experienced in terms of government, structure, participation, and social change. Ultimately, we will try to determine if Democracy lives up to its definition as a form of government that is, to quote Abraham Lincoln, "Of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The class will be seminar style with students actively participating in group discussions based on weekly assigned content and their own notes, sharing their own ideas about the week's topic. Assignments will include the reading of a background book and writing of an informal response paper (750 – 1250 words); a group project involving electoral participation and results in the United States; last, students will write and present a final paper (1500 – 2000 words) drawing from course content on what Democracy means to them.

*This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement and can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.*

### **Honors 293 (2): Beyond the Bench: Scientists as Activists (#8125)**

**TuTh 4:00 - 5:15pm**

**Connie Chow, Honors College**

This interactive seminar invites students to examine and compare historical and contemporary examples of science in action in the social and political realms. In a world where developments in science and technology present possibilities and risks for human and more-than-human inhabitants as well as natural systems, should scientists and other STEM professionals wrestle with the role of Western science in causing harm? Should scientists advocate for themselves and colleagues within their profession? How (rightly) do they wield the power afforded by their professional and societal stature, within and beyond their disciplines? How might they communicate scientific evidence, address skeptics, and mobilize others to create change?

We will explore issues ranging from environmental conservation to climate change; genetic and chemical engineering to militarization; AI and robotics; eugenics and the precautionary principle; and others you want to learn more about, through guest speakers and a variety of resources, academic and popular, print, podcasts and film. By considering the risks and triumphs of publicly upholding principles and challenging the status quo, students may discover how they might combine their intellectual and social concerns, no matter their chosen profession.

Students contribute weekly (ungraded) reflections/ discussion. Assessed assignments include leading one class discussion on an issue of concern; collaborative contributions to Wikipedia and or an archival project for *Science for the People*; either two short 5-page, interest-driven, research assignments or an action or service-learning project that contribute to a final paper, and a final (public) presentation.

*This course fulfills a Social/Behavioral (SB) distribution requirement.*

**Honors 294 (1): Activism in Indigenous Communities (#8031)**

**MWF 10:00 - 10:50am**

***Christopher Fung, Anthropology***

This course examines the ways in which social and environmental justice activism is pursued in three different communities in three different continents. The three examples are Abahlali baseMjondolo (The Shack Dwellers' Movement) in South Africa, the #NODAPL resistance movement based in Standing Rock, South Dakota, and the Ihumatao Land Occupation in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

We will use a combination of scholarly and popular sources to examine the ways in which these particular examples of activism draw upon important ideas and values based in indigenous and marginalized communities.

Students will be assessed through several short written assignments, and a final project based on an in-depth exploration of a particular example of activism of the student's choosing, using concepts and approaches discussed in the course.

*This course fulfills a World Cultures (WC) distribution requirement and can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.*

**Honors 295 (1): Radiation from Radio to X-rays: Technology, Nature, and Society (#10689)**

**TuTh 2:00 - 3:15pm**

***Giles Blaney, Honors College***

This course will cover topics relating to colors, visible and invisible. In technical language, these colors are different energies of electromagnetic radiation. Structured week by week, we will explore this energy spectrum, starting from the lowest energy of radio waves and progressing through microwave, infrared, visible, ultraviolet, X-ray, and gamma radiation. At each stop along the spectrum, we will cover technologies that harness this radiation, where it is found in nature, and how it and its technologies affect society. This course will help students appreciate the interconnections between these concepts and view the universe from a new perspective.

The aim will be to enable students to answer the question: "What is the electromagnetic spectrum?" in a broad way. Sub-questions students should be able to answer at the end of the course include: Why do physicists think of radio, light, and X-rays all as the same thing? What technologies are enabled by applying concepts developed in optics to microwaves (i.e., the advantage of interconnections between concepts)? Where do you use electromagnetic radiation in your everyday life? At the end of the course, students should be comfortable with their understanding of electromagnetic radiation and communicating their knowledge to others.

Assessment in this course will be primarily based on a term project with both an oral presentation and written reports. For this project, students will choose a segment of the electromagnetic spectrum and communicate their topic in the context of technology, nature, and society.

We then focus on philosophical and societal consequences of using race as a discriminator of differences, how this leads to genocides, ethnic cleansing, slavery, and contemporary massive acts of discrimination across the globe. We will cover some of the classic philosophical work by Hobbes, Rawls, Weber, etc. The societal consequences of using race will be examined



using data related to a number of social determinants (health care services, education attainment, housing, employment, incarceration) that adversely impact people of color. Invited guests representing people of color will play an important role in this course of study by sharing their stories related to the experiences they encountered when faced with acts of discrimination.

Students will have three major research/writing assignments (two 3-page essays and one 5-page essay) and three impact papers (responding to articles or movies posted online), plus an oral presentation at the end of the semester.

*This course fulfills a Natural Sciences (NS) distribution requirement.*

## **HONORS 380 Junior Colloquia for Spring 2025**

*Students can take an HONORS 380 Junior Colloquium after completing at least two of their 200-level Honors requirements.*

### **Honors 380 (1): Ghost in the Machine: Consciousness, A.I. and the Future of Civilization (#7640)**

**TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm**

**Todd Drogy, English**

What is consciousness? Where does it reside? Can it be created, artificially? What can we do to prepare ourselves for advanced AI, as we anticipate massive technological change and its impact on various existential threats posed to human civilization?

In *The Ghost in the Machine: Consciousness, AI, and Future of Civilization*, we will explore and endeavor to understand the origin and nature of consciousness. By looking back toward ancient texts and forward toward the edges of contemporary science and philosophy, we will engage with several models of consciousness. Then, we will seek to extrapolate and apply such models to the great ethical and technological challenges confronting our civilization.

To what degree might AI transform the psycho-social domains of relationship, community, sex, labor, gender, health, and war? If AI becomes conscious, how might we incorporate it into our rituals, laws, and the protection of natural rights? Academic texts will play an important role in this course, but we will also look to popular culture—TV, film, music, and social media—as we seek to grapple with ethical dilemmas posed by AI and its multiplicity of effects on human civilization.

This is a discussion-based class, with a strong emphasis on class participation. We will compose three (500-600 word) Mini Essays on readings/films/discussions. You will also keep a journal of reflective, informal writing. A thesis-driven research paper (12-14 pages) will be due at semester's end.

### **Honors 380 (2): U.S. and Mexico Health Care Systems (#7927)**

**MWF 2:00am - 2:50pm**

**Delaney Bowen, Biology**

This course is an exploration of health care systems in the United States and Mexico, and is co-taught co-taught by faculty from the Honors College and faculty from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) School of Medicine. This course includes a trip to Mexico City from Friday 3/14/2025 to Sunday 3/23/2025 (i.e. the 10 days of spring break). Attendance for the entire length of the trip is a fully required aspect of the class. The trip is heavily subsidized by the Honors College, but each student will be required to cover a small fraction (namely \$800) of the trip cost.

To apply for this course, please submit a 250-400 word response to the following question no later than Tuesday, Nov. 5th. at the following Global Programs study abroad link: [https://viaumassboston.via-trm.com/program\\_brochure/24333/](https://viaumassboston.via-trm.com/program_brochure/24333/) The essay question is: "What are your reasons for wanting to take this course and to go on this trip?"

This course will analyze the nature and function of the health care systems in the U.S. and Mexico. The course will also cover the social, political, economic, ethical, professional, and technological forces that impact the U.S. and Mexico health care systems. The course will be very interdisciplinary, and students from all majors are encouraged to apply. The course will examine major U.S. health care/insurance programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, Medicare for All, the Public Option and private health insurance in the U.S. A series of guest speakers from the UMass

Boston community will share their perspectives on these topics from a wide range of disciplinary lenses. UNAM faculty will discuss the Seguro Popular, the Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar (INSABI), the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), and private health insurance in Mexico.

This class will be co-taught with professors at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the largest and most prestigious university in Mexico. Students from UNAM will be joining us throughout the spring break trip. We will travel to Mexico City to spend 10 days at UNAM to learn about the Mexican health care system and visit healthcare facilities in Mexico City, such as Hospital General de México, Centro Médico Nacional Siglo XXI, and Médica Sur. We will also spend a few days visiting cultural sites such as the National Museum of Anthropology, the Teotihuacan Archaeological Zone, and Xochimilco (the site of remnants of a network of canals built by the Aztec people). The course will be taught entirely in English, but you will have opportunities to use (or learn) some Spanish on the spring break trip.

Students will submit short written reflections throughout the term, and the final project will include a 10-minute oral presentation and a 4000-word paper with at least 8 academic citations. *This course can also be applied to the minor in Wealth, Poverty, and Opportunity.* **Students who already took HONORS 380 can use this course to fulfill an HONORS 200-level requirement instead!**

**Honors 380 (3): Unraveling Sustainability and Resilience: Can We Have It All? (#10690)**

**Tuesday 12:30 - 3:15pm**

***B. R. Balachandran and Janna Cohen-Rosenthal, Urban Planning & Community Development***

Can we achieve sustainability and make it work for everyone? Dive into this thought-provoking course that explores the delicate balance between sustainability, resilience, equity, and justice. You'll become a sustainability detective, investigating real-world cases at UMass Boston and beyond. Engage with researchers, experts, and practitioners to uncover the hidden connections and conflicts in sustainability initiatives.

Throughout the semester, you'll embark on a series of mini-missions: crafting three short "sustainability snapshots" (2-3 pages each), mapping out key players in the sustainability game, and gathering crucial data. Your ultimate challenge? A comprehensive term paper (10-15 pages) that weaves together your discoveries, existing research, and personal insights. Fuel your investigation with a mix of academic articles, captivating case studies, and breaking news on sustainability hot topics. Join us for an adventure in critical thinking and problem-solving as we work towards creating a more sustainable and equitable future!

***And finally ... an Alternate A.I. Course: HONORS 490 Elective Course for Spring 2025***

**Honors 490 (2): A.I. for All (#14019) on Friday 2:00 - 4:45pm (synchronous virtual), with three in-person meetings on January 31 (week 1), March 28 (post-Spring Break), and May 9 (before study period)**

***Wei Ding, Computer Science***

This special topics class, "A.I. for All," is designed to integrate the research, education, and outreach goals of the Paul English Applied AI Institute, providing UMass Boston students with a comprehensive understanding of the impact and applications of artificial intelligence (AI) across diverse disciplines. The course emphasizes not only the technical aspects of AI but also its social, ethical, and diversity implications. This course jointly offered by the Honors College and Computer Science Department is an elective for both undergraduate and graduate students. No prior AI knowledge is required. The course will feature weekly guest speakers. The course is open to students from all disciplines, fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Topics covered will include machine learning fundamentals, natural language processing, as well as the implications of AI for ethics, political regulation, healthcare, finance, creativity, education, and cybersecurity.

**Prerequisites: A minimum of 60 credits for undergraduate students, or permission of the special topic course committee (e-mail [wei.ding@umb.edu](mailto:wei.ding@umb.edu)).** If you already have 60 credits completed in WISER, then please email Jason.Roush@umb.edu to be added to this course with Departmental Consent once it's been listed in WISER.

Class Assignments: Students will collaborate in class to complete a report for each invited talk (50%), write a team-based Term Project (30%), give one presentation (10%), and be expected to attend and participate (10%). At our first day in person meeting, we will elaborate on how the students should work together to produce the class assignments and term project collectively, role assignment and role rotating for each class assignment, camera enabling during the Zoom meetings, etc. Methods: The course will employ a combination of invited lectures, hands-on projects from professors and industry experts, and discussions. Practical projects will provide students with the opportunity to apply AI concepts in real-world scenarios.

*(PLEASE NOTE that **TEN** seats in this combined-section, cross-listed Computer Science course have been reserved for Honors College students to take for elective credits. This course does NOT count towards any Honors College requirements specifically, so it is simply for elective credits towards your 120-credit minimum required for graduation!)*