HONR292A Seminars for Spring 2019
Section 1: Science as a Way of Knowing: Animal Behavior – J. Moore
Link to syllabus
The ways that non-human animals behave have fascinated and mystified humans since people first made drawings on the walls of ancient caves, and they continue to capture our attention. We watch them and invent explanations for their behavior, often with little evidence. Much as the ancient Greeks anthropomorphized their gods, giving them human traits, we do the same to animals: They are “sneaky,” “wise,” “stupid,” “jealous”. . .and they are, ultimately, dumb—and therein lies the mystery. How can we understand a non-speaking creature on its own terms? Can we know how the birds at dawn begin to sing, all at the same time? How do we understand the intelligence of fish? The map-making of honeybees? Do animals think? How would we know?

Section 2: Science as a Way of Knowing: Ocean Dynamics and Carbon Dioxide – U. Quillmann
Link to syllabus
Why has climate change become the focal point of an increasingly polarized political conversation, whereas the vast majorities of other countries have long accepted climate change as a scientific fact and have accepted that human activities are the foremost cause of it? Climate science has become a pawn in the US political arena, with numerous politicians ignoring, rejecting, or misrepresenting scientific conclusions that conflict with their political views. People who lack authority on climate science are discussing the causes and solutions for climate change. The heated debate over climate science begs the question, what is science? In our seminar we will explore “science as a way of knowing.” Ocean dynamics and carbon dioxide (CO2) will provide the framework for our seminar. Ocean dynamics and CO2 are the crucial players in climate change, regardless of whether climate change is natural or caused by human activities. We live on an ocean planet with >70% of the Earth’s surface covered by ocean and >97% of the Earth’s surface water being stored in the ocean. The ocean plays an enormous role in absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere, thus mitigating the effects of global warming by absorbing approximately one half of the CO2 added to the atmosphere from fossil fuel burning. Scientists fear the ocean reaching a tipping point when it can no longer uptake any additional CO2 from the atmosphere. We will examine the oceanic processes that make it possible for the ocean to take up excess atmospheric CO2. We will examine scientific tools that are being used to determine past CO2 levels in the atmosphere and in the ocean. We will scrutinize climate models that are being used to predict future climate change. We will also look at the effects a warming ocean has on sea level, ice sheets and glaciers, sea ice, hurricanes, monsoons, and El Niño events. The role of CO2 in warming was recognized long before the “other” CO2 problem was recognized. The “other” CO2 problem is ocean acidification, often referred to as the “evil twin” of climate change.

HONR292B Seminars for Spring 2019
Section 1: Manifest America: Knowing the Roots of Modern America by Looking West – D. Sheflin
Link to syllabus
The course is formulated around the study of an American identity that emerged with the articulation of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s. The ideology of Manifest Destiny, though not entirely new to Americans in that period, came to work as a justification for American expansion into the North American West largely because it facilitated the sense of exceptionalism that excused the costs of such expansion. In exploring the impact that it had and its influence on American history, we will connect Manifest Destiny to some of the more dramatic and formative events in US history, including the overland migration, the era of the gold rush, the Mexican-American War, and even the Civil War. In looking at how these issues of freedom, democracy, and opportunity play out in the American West and in the nascent American empire, we will look at the construction of race and the racialization of non-white people in the Americas, the promotion of American masculinity at home and abroad, and the balancing of American ideals and self-interest. We can then make broad
connections with both the context and the legacies of this period by considering how much these themes remain part of an identity supported by many Americans today.

Section 2 & 5: – J. Kitchens
Link to syllabus
The theme for this course is the social construction of knowledge, and it engages with the ideas of how knowledge is produced, by whom and for what purposes. Other considerations include what counts as knowledge and how has it been produced and transmitted in the past (and present), e.g., public schooling? What other institutions are involved in the production of knowledge? And what is the relationship between knowledge and power? Course materials will range in disciplinary perspectives including philosophy, history, education, sociology, literature, and film. Students will also be guided in a self-reflective investigation into how knowledge has been produced in their personal lives, and specifically how such knowledge informs their worldview, i.e., how they interpret and act in the world.

Section 3 & 6: Knowing in Arts and Humanities: Do Non-Human Animals Create Art? – S. Zwick-Tapley
Link to syllabus
The overarching theme for this seminar is the “construction of knowledge.” Students will be engaged in discussions, readings, written communication, and oral communication to consider ideas of how knowledge is produced, by whom it is produced and for what purposes it is produced. The political construction of knowledge challenges students to consider the potential impacts of manipulating what is known and by whom it is known. Cultural identity, arts, philosophy, literature, film, and social media will be considered for their subjectivity and selectivity in the sharing of knowledge which can ultimately drive election outcomes, perpetuate social injustices, or be used as justification for wars. Students will also be challenged to reflect upon the sources of their own knowledge and to identify gaps that may ultimately impact their views and actions.

Section 4: Knowing in Arts and Humanities: Construction of Knowledge – M. Brown
Link to syllabus
The overarching theme for this seminar is the “construction of knowledge.” Students will be engaged in discussions, readings, written communication, and oral communication to consider ideas of how knowledge is produced, by whom it is produced and for what purposes it is produced. The political construction of knowledge challenges students to consider the potential impacts of manipulating what is known and by whom it is known. Cultural identity, arts, philosophy, literature, film, and social media will be considered for their subjectivity and selectivity in the sharing of knowledge which can ultimately drive election outcomes, perpetuate social injustices, or be used as justification for wars. Students will also be challenged to reflect upon the sources of their own knowledge and to identify gaps that may ultimately impact their views and actions.

Section 5: See Section 2

Section 6: See Section 3

Section 7: Knowing in Arts and Humanities: Science Fiction and Social Criticism – J. Brown
Link to syllabus
In 1978, literary scholar Darko Suvin described science fiction as the literature of “cognitive estrangement.” It was, he argued, the tension between the known reality of the reader’s world (cognition) and the imagined alternative world of the text (estrangement) that gave Science Fiction a privileged role in encouraging the kind of critical thought about one’s own society and circumstances that could disrupt the blinding nature of ideology. This seminar will explore the rich tradition of the science fiction short story by authors such as Isaac Asimov, Ursula K. LeGuin, Samuel R. Delany, Joanna Russ, Ray Bradbury, Octavia Butler, and Frank Herbert alongside select critical essays.
Finally, the course’s ultimate goal is to investigate the ways that our attempts to know the imagined future affect our ways of knowing our present world.

Section 8: Knowing in Arts and Humanities: Memoir and Non-fiction Graphic Novels– A. Davies

How do we know our own story? Which stories are ours to tell? How do we make sense of different views of the same events? To understand these questions and explore possible answers, we'll start the semester with 5 weeks considering the philosophy of knowing. The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing - and their purposes, values, and limitations - in the arts and humanities. The seminar considers what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and the ethical and aesthetic implications of what one gains and does with the acquisition of knowledge. Understanding how we come to know will help us consider how we come to tell our own stories and the stories of those around us. To understand how others have grappled with these issues, we'll delve into non-fiction graphic novels, both memoirs and histories. We'll consider how visuals and text function together to tell true stories and whose truth they represent. We'll also consider whose truth they leave out and the implications of those choices. During the semester, students will not only critically analyze these texts, but they will also craft non-fiction works of their own that will combine language and visuals. Writing our own stories will bring new awareness to the limitations of our knowledge and the value of questioning our interpretations.

HONR292C Seminars for Spring 2019

Section 1: Knowing Across Cultures: Refugees in a Global Era – M. López Ramírez

There are around 60 million people in the world who have been displaced by war, persecution, natural disaster or conflict. Migration has become a big issue, especially after multiple terrorist attacks in Europe and the US over the last few years. As a consequence of the current immigration narrative, right-wing movements and parties, xenophobia, a fear for diversity and a lack of tolerance are on the rise around the world. This course will inquire into the nature, causes and consequences of contemporary refugee waves in our globalized world. We will set aside the current narrative and have a more open dialogue. To that end, we will debate personal social identity construction and stereotypes, and analyze the positive side of immigration to create a more open, respectful and tolerant society. Particular attention will be paid to the recent EU crisis, integration and segregation processes, racism, and cultural diversity. What are ways of knowing? The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and analyzing how cultural values differently inform research methodologies. The seminar considers how cultural values inform what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and moral implications of how knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and reproduced. Specifically, this course will provide experiences for students to critically and analytically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds influence what we know about self, others, and the world. These reflections will involve examples of how social and historical gaps, omissions, and shifts in knowledge, including what is not known, what cannot be known, and what is un-known (which may have been disregarded, discarded, or forgotten) often reflect competing cultural perspectives and values. Students will also learn to understand the effects of cultural bias on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how this shapes understandings of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge. In this way, students will explore how cultural values inform and influence which research methodologies are
used for knowledge production, construction, and acquisition. By analyzing contemporary case studies or issues on a theme, students will further integrate and evaluate different ways of knowing.

Section 2: Knowing Across Cultures: Encounters with the Other in Literature and Film – E. Brinks
Link to syllabus
The seminar considers how cultural values inform what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the ways humans gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and moral implications of how knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and reproduced. We will reflect on these concerns firstly through a series of readings common to all HONR292 courses and secondly, through specific examples of how literature and film construct our knowing of other cultures and peoples. Literature and film give us a unique form for experiencing a range of cultures and ways of knowing. In particular, they stage dramas that allow readers to consider and feel what it is like to interact with different cultures and with what we consider strange and/or foreign. As recent studies of cognitive science have demonstrated, fictional texts are paradoxically more successful at developing empathy in readers than nonfictional ones are, despite nonfiction’s claims to truth. In a world where collaborative work with and concern for people from diverse cultures will prove essential to our collective survival as a species, it’s essential that we engage imaginatively and empathetically with perspectives distant and distinct from our own. Literature and film are two media that uniquely bring such experiences to the fore, even if their stories are “made up.” Through their representational worlds, we can see human life through others’ eyes, understand different cultural perspectives, and, perhaps most valuably, we can “see ourselves seeing the other,” allowing for critical insight into the cultural determinants that shape our understanding of self and other. To examine how the foreign is represented in literature and film, three sites of encounter between self and other are chosen as representative and valuable permutations on the theme: 1) the colonial encounter between settler colonists and indigenous peoples; 2) intra-communal tensions; and 3) the encounters arising from migrations and the emergence of global identities. These vividly imagined narratives foreground discrepancies in economic, political, and social power, the shaping role of historical events, and the diverse ways of we are ignorant of and misunderstand others from different cultures, as well as the ways that we share common perspectives and goals. We will grapple with how we construct what we claim to know about people from other cultures and the vital necessity of self-awareness. Literary works and film from the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries are chosen with regard to how they illuminate how coming to terms with difference or otherness is an essential, inescapable, and enriching point of reference for living humanely in the world today.

Section 3: Knowing Across Cultures: Wildlife Conservation Issues – N. Vieira
Link to syllabus
The seminar will engage students in the exploration of ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and values, and analyzing how these perspectives and values influence what we know about self, others, and world issues. Specifically, we will look at how culture influences global conservation of fish and wildlife. Students will critically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds interact with science to influence both conservation successes and intercultural conflicts over wildlife management. Students will also learn to recognize effects of different “ways of knowing” and cultural biases on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how they shape understanding of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge in conservation, and in life in general. We will explore these themes through readings, group discussion, movies and videos, guest speakers, walking field trips and outside time!

Section 5: Knowing Across Cultures: The 14th Amendment and Race in U.S. History – J. Kim
Link to syllabus
The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and analyzing how cultural values differently inform
research methodologies. The seminar considers how cultural values inform what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and moral implications of how knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and reproduced. Specifically, this course will provide experiences for students to critically and analytically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds influence what we know about self, others, and the world. These reflections will involve examples of how social and historical gaps, omissions, and shifts in knowledge, including what is not known, what cannot be known, and what is un-known (which may have been disregarded, discarded, or forgotten) often reflect competing cultural perspectives and values. Students will also learn to understand the effects of cultural bias on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how this shapes understandings of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge. In this way, students will explore how cultural values inform and influence which research methodologies are used for knowledge production, construction, and acquisition. By analyzing contemporary case studies or issues on a theme, students will further integrate and evaluate different ways of knowing. The U.S. society and history are unlike any other. We are a nation founded on the lofty ideals of freedom, equality, and rule of law. The ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution affirmed these principles and established new standards for equality and fairness. However, our history is simultaneously replete with examples that significantly deviate from such principles. As a nation, we have long struggled with this contradiction, and, the persistence of inequalities continues to pose challenges for us today. Race (relations, conflicts, identities) is one such area where the tension between the promises of these ideals and the lived realities seems to be an enduring feature of an American experience. This seminar-course seeks to uncover how the concept of race originated, surveys key historical moments when race took the center stage, and commissions us to struggle together to figure out ways to move forward as a society.