HONR492 Seminars for Spring 2019

Section 1: Philanthropy In Action: Passion To Serve – F. Glycenfer

We often wrestle with how to put our good intentions more fully into action in ways that will benefit our community as well as enhance our individual lives. Volunteering in America is at an all-time record high however, there can often be challenges between making the world a better place and actually achieving it. This course empowers students to maximize their potential to serve others through the lens of assisting in alleviating material poverty by investigating theoretical constructs, viewing film documentaries, incorporating fiction reading and practical hands-on experience. The call for aid in our world is great--our passion to serve must be greater.

Section 2: Understanding the Quest for Human Liberation through Philosophy and Film – K. Jaggers

The modern age has rightly been referred to as the “age of freedom.” Compared to life in ancient and medieval societies – where superstition, communal obligations and entrenched hierarchies of social power effectively undermined the autonomy of individual action and thought – the modern age represents a “rational” rejection of these traditional forms of social stratification, authority and control. Forged by the ideals of the European Enlightenment, the modern world was envisioned to be a world in which the individual would be liberated from the dead hand of ignorance, tradition and hierarchy. While the desire of humankind to shed the yoke of unjust authority relations and systems of social control is, as noted by President Bush, “on the march,” nevertheless, the appropriate role of freedom in society continues to be a matter of considerable debate and conflict. While “spreading freedom’s blessings” may be “the calling of our time,” what, precisely, does this mean? What does it mean to have free will; to live in a free society; to express oneself freely? Moreover, is the march of freedom inevitable? Is it desirable? Should it be unbridled in its promotion and construction? Is freedom the “natural” condition of mankind – “the birthright and deep desire of every human soul” -- or do humans actually covet other values -- personal happiness, social order, fealty to God, commitment to community, the pursuit of social justice, etc. -- which may actually conflict with the unchecked promotion of individual freedom? While there is a temptation in our society to uncritically accept the idea of freedom as an unalloyed “good,” in this course we will seek to deconstruct the idea of freedom and systematically explore its social and ethical boundaries. In this course we will view the concept of freedom through the analytical lens of philosophy and the artistic lens of modern cinema. Why cinema? The arts – painting, literature, theatre, music, dance and film – play an important role in human society not simply because they entertain us but also because they force us to reflect upon and challenge our commonly held beliefs concerning social reality (metaphysics), human knowledge (epistemology), and moral values (axiology). In other words, the arts help us better understand, as well as shape, our collective human experiences. Contemporary cinema, while often infantile and banal, nevertheless, possesses the capacity to both challenge and mold our values, desires and even identities with its powerful narratives and images. In this class we will use film as a pedagogical tool for better understanding the role of freedom in our lives. In addition to exploring how modern cinema addresses the idea of freedom, we will also explore the significance of this artistic medium as a mechanism for both social liberation and social control. Throughout the course of the semester we will examine this topic by approaching the concept of freedom through a myriad of distinct -- and often incompatible -- perspectives: (1) psychological freedom; (2) spiritual freedom; (3) biological freedom; (4) metaphysical freedom; (5) social freedom; (6) political freedom; and (7) economic freedom. As we shall discover, only by exploring the many dimensions of freedom, and then investigating how each dimension is influenced by the degree of freedom found in the others, will we be able to achieve a deeper understanding of the promises and pitfalls associate with the pursuit of human liberation in the contemporary world.

Section 4: Construction of Self in Philosophy, Literature, and Medicine – G. Callahan

The modern age has rightly been referred to as the “age of freedom.” Compared to life in ancient and medieval societies – where superstition, communal obligations and entrenched hierarchies of social power effectively undermined the autonomy of individual action and thought – the modern age represents a “rational” rejection of these traditional forms of social stratification, authority and control. Forged by the ideals of the European Enlightenment, the modern world was envisioned to be a world in which the individual would be liberated from the dead hand of ignorance, tradition and hierarchy. While the desire of humankind to shed the yoke of unjust authority relations and systems of social control is, as noted by President Bush, “on the march,” nevertheless, the appropriate role of freedom in society continues to be a matter of considerable debate and conflict. While “spreading freedom’s blessings” may be “the calling of our time,” what, precisely, does this mean? What does it mean to have free will; to live in a free society; to express oneself freely? Moreover, is the march of freedom inevitable? Is it desirable? Should it be unbridled in its promotion and construction? Is freedom the “natural” condition of mankind – “the birthright and deep desire of every human soul” -- or do humans actually covet other values -- personal happiness, social order, fealty to God, commitment to community, the pursuit of social justice, etc. -- which may actually conflict with the unchecked promotion of individual freedom? While there is a temptation in our society to uncritically accept the idea of freedom as an unalloyed “good,” in this course we will seek to deconstruct the idea of freedom and systematically explore its social and ethical boundaries. In this course we will view the concept of freedom through the analytical lens of philosophy and the artistic lens of modern cinema. Why cinema? The arts – painting, literature, theatre, music, dance and film – play an important role in human society not simply because they entertain us but also because they force us to reflect upon and challenge our commonly held beliefs concerning social reality (metaphysics), human knowledge (epistemology), and moral values (axiology). In other words, the arts help us better understand, as well as shape, our collective human experiences. Contemporary cinema, while often infantile and banal, nevertheless, possesses the capacity to both challenge and mold our values, desires and even identities with its powerful narratives and images. In this class we will use film as a pedagogical tool for better understanding the role of freedom in our lives. In addition to exploring how modern cinema addresses the idea of freedom, we will also explore the significance of this artistic medium as a mechanism for both social liberation and social control. Throughout the course of the semester we will examine this topic by approaching the concept of freedom through a myriad of distinct -- and often incompatible -- perspectives: (1) psychological freedom; (2) spiritual freedom; (3) biological freedom; (4) metaphysical freedom; (5) social freedom; (6) political freedom; and (7) economic freedom. As we shall discover, only by exploring the many dimensions of freedom, and then investigating how each dimension is influenced by the degree of freedom found in the others, will we be able to achieve a deeper understanding of the promises and pitfalls associate with the pursuit of human liberation in the contemporary world.
Construction of Self will explore three views of this most essential of human traits -- the biological, the philosophical, and the literary. Literature and philosophy have for centuries probed at the surfaces and the cavities of self. Biology, our teachers have told us, couldn’t care a whole lot less about the nature of the human self. But as we will see in this course, biological and medical sciences, though less overtly, are also steadily changing the way we view our selves. Three pillars of self. However, since there is no single aspect of this universe that is not in some way relevant to the process of self-definition, we might as easily have picked any of several other perspectives, including things like art, religion, sociology, archeology, cosmology, and so on. But we only have one semester. And biology, philosophy, and literature offer a reasonable sampling of how we have struggled with our pictures of our selves since we first noticed we had selves and wondered just what we ought to do with them. Furthermore, the consideration of these seemingly disparate subjects and their intersections will allow us to explore the process of self-construction and the ways in which our images of self are synthesized from the seemingly discontinuous fragments of our experience.

Section 5: Globalize This? Fear and Loathing in the Age of Progress and Prosperity – K. Jaggers

In this course we will explore both the perils and promises of globalization. For better or worse, the process of globalization is fundamentally transforming the economic, cultural and political foundations of the globe. While globalization holds out the promise of progress – providing significant opportunities for the emancipation of much of the world’s population from the tyranny of poverty, ignorance and political repression – it simultaneously evokes a sense of fear and loathing throughout much of the globe. Globalization is a contentious process -- its meaning almost entirely dependent on who is talking about it. Pro-market economic reformers, displaced workers, environmental and human rights activists, security experts and cultural nationalists, to name a few, all compete for the right to stake claim to the idea of globalization and shape public perceptions about its potential impact on the world in which we live. In a very real sense globalization has become the buzzword that serves to crystallize disagreements concerning the speed and direction of social and political change in the world at-large. While both the meaning and merits of globalization have become highly politicized in recent years, with intellectual debate about this topic sometimes transforming itself into contentious political action and legislation, in this class we will seek to evaluate the origins, nature and impact of this phenomenon by using insights and analytical tools from the humanities (e.g., history and philosophy) and the social sciences (e.g., economics, political science, psychology and sociology).

Section 6: Women & Early American Psychology – V. Volbrecht

1) Context of American Early Psychology - To understand and appreciate the challenges and successes of the first generation women American psychologists, it is important to understand the context of American Psychology. This module examines the development and influences on early American psychology. This includes: psychology’s fit within the history of science, the development of mental philosophy into the science of psychology, and the influences of philosophical thinking, evolution, Germany ideas, and American society on the formation of “modern” psychology. This sets the stage to understand the direction of psychological education and research of early American psychologists. 2) Views on Women - To understand and appreciate the challenges and successes of the first generation women psychologists, it important to know the views of society on the female sex and how this effected their opportunities for education and professional careers. This module examines the views of women during this time period, including those of male psychologists that mentored future women graduate students as well as availability of college education and academic careers. The feminism movement during this time period is also explored. 3) Early American Women Psychologists - The definition of first-generation American psychologists is based on the criterion set by Elizabeth Scarborough and Laurel Furumoto in their 1987 book Untold Lives: The First
Generation of American Women Psychologists. First-generation American women psychologists completed their doctoral work in or before 1906. This module will include an overview of this generation of women psychologists, male mentors and their exclusion/inclusion of women, women psychologists preceding the first generation (the foremothers), and then various first-generation women psychologists. Unfortunately, the inclusion criterion of 1906 limits the inclusion of under-represented populations, so one of the first-generation, Afro-American women psychologists will be studied. This module concludes with an overview of the second-generation women psychologists and permits comparison between the two groups.

Section 7: Change: Social, Environmental, Economic, & Institutional Perspectives – J. Raadik Cottrell

There’s only one thing for sure in life and that’s Change. We as individuals change (i.e., beliefs, attitudes and behaviors) throughout our lifespan and so does the world around us. In lieu of today’s rapid societal, environmental, economic, technological, etc. changes, the need for more balanced development is acute. Bold and transformative steps are necessary to shift global societies on a positive course of change to a more sustainable and resilient path. Today’s young generation is undoubtedly one of the most influential agents of change for a more sustainable future. Changing world views and the ability to take advantage of the advancements of today’s science and technology create endless opportunities and pose challenging ethical responsibilities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development currently adopted by the United Nations is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity for poverty alleviation, universal education, health and well-being. The 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. This course through multidisciplinary approach perspective examines how responsible practice may help realize human rights for more, to achieve gender equality and empowerment to mention the few. Through the lens of a holistic sustainability framework, the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability along with institutional mechanisms are used to examine the opportunities of achieving the SDGs. Students will be engaged in classroom debates and discussions, explore different scenarios of change through case studies and field trips. Interdisciplinary and multicultural viewpoints are encouraged to gain an understanding how flows of information, people and knowledge can make a meaningful change.

Section 8: Food & Power – M. Van Buren

Why do we eat what we eat? Most of us assume that our diet is based on individual choice, but by refocusing our lens to capture a longer historical perspective and a broader range of social forces we can see that our personal preferences are shaped by a web of social, economic, and political relations that extends from families to transnational corporations. The goal of this course is to encourage students to address the question of why they eat what they do by considering their diets as a product of historical and contemporary conditions that extend far beyond consumer choice. Topics to be considered include the development of agriculture, the globalization of food production, local and sustainable as well as industrial agriculture, hunger, the politics surrounding dietary recommendations, and food activism.