

Course Descriptions

University Honors Program

Spring 2025

Origins and Evolution of Modern Thought 2

Scientific Reasoning and Discovery 5

Introductory and Special 7

Self & Society 8

Arts & Humanities 14

Contract Courses 23

Senior Capstone and Thesis 24

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Origins and Evolution of Modern Thought

Revolution

Professor Joseph Trullinger
HONR 1016:MV1 – 3 Credits
CRN: 23629
MW 8:30AM – 9:45AM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: Modernity is often understood as an era of innovation and upheaval, of new ideas and ways of life. Modernity seems new by virtue of its idea that what is new is permissible, if not preferable, over against adhering to time-honored order. This section of Origins will attempt to understand modernity as an era of revolution, of radical breaks with all sorts of established order: political, familial, economic, moral, cultural, and everything in between. In addition to those who argue for a sweeping overhaul of society, we will engage important critics of revolution, who make the case that the complaints of revolutionaries are ill-founded, or else can be resolved through gradual reform rather than sudden revolution. Reform versus revolution: the opposition between these views will form the basic framework for our exploration of a wide array of texts, criticizing and calling for bourgeois revolution, anti-colonial revolution, feminist revolution, slave revolts, communist revolution, fascist revolution, moral repentance, spiritual renewal, and revolutions in social values as fundamental as democracy and individualism.

Freedom in the Modern Age

Professor William Winstead
HONR 1016:MV3 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24392
MW 2:30PM - 3:45PM

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HONR 1016:MV4 - 3 Credits
CRN: 24393
MW 4:10PM - 5:25PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: The modern age has often been characterized as the epoch of absolute freedom. Its insistence on individual liberty and the right to live one's life as one wishes, free of interference from tradition, church, or state, are symptomatic of modernity's radical commitment to freedom. The scope of its emancipatory impulse may be measured not only by the radical politics of the age—the American, French, and Russian revolutions, among others—but also by the defense of unrestrained expression in the aesthetic sphere (artistic freedom, freedom of speech) and toleration of individual conscience in the moral sphere. Our readings this semester will examine the intellectual revolutions that established freedom as the central value of the modern project and institutionalized it in the liberal state, the market economy, and the self-reflective individual. In the final section of the course, we will consider the subtle and profound

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

forms of personal liberation found in modern Buddhist thought. Readings will include Hobbes, Mill, Nietzsche, Freud, Beauvoir, Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, The Combahee River Collective, the Dalai Lama, and Zen Buddhism.

The Death of God

Professor Mark Ralkowski
HONR 1016:MV5 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24394
TR 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: Is capitalism always dehumanizing, or can it promote human welfare? How do race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and social class affect our understanding of ourselves and others? Are our cultural values good for us, or do they undermine our mental health and harm the planet? Do experiences of marginalization and oppression give those who experience them unique knowledge about our society and how it operates? What might the earth and nonhuman animals teach us about how we ought to live? As we explore questions like these in this course, we will discover how philosophy can be what Freire calls the “practice of freedom.” We will begin by studying the rise of the modern worldview and the spread of its political values, but most of our time will be spent on a wide range of cultural critics—e.g., Tolstoy, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Frankl, Baldwin, de Beauvoir, Lorde, the Combahee River Collective, Freire, the Dalai Lama, and Robin Wall Kimmerer—who lay the foundations for a less alienating and more humane world. Our discussions will cover some of their most revolutionary ideas, which have transformed the way we think about the human place in nature, the relationship between culture and economics, our conscious and unconscious minds, colonialism and liberation, gender and racial justice, and the aims of an emancipatory education. The main goal of this course is for us to see how these philosophies are more than abstract theories in books that are hard to read. They are provocations to reexamine our beliefs and values, reckon with our place in history, and reimagine the future of our interconnected world.

Freedom and Liberation

Professor Eyal Aviv
HONR 1016:MV6 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24395
TR 11:30AM - 12:45PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: Our lives are filled with deadlines, dress codes, or laws that limit our personal desires. These constraints are a part of the human (and non-human) condition. But so is our universal desire to be free. Imagine your life with absolute freedom and nothing to limit you. What would it look like? Martin Luther King Jr. ended his powerful “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963, declaring that we are “Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.” The Buddha famously declared, “Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so also this teaching and discipline has one taste, the taste of liberation.” But what does it mean to be free or liberated, and from what?

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

This semester, we'll explore these questions together. Like the Fall semester, we'll read and discuss a diverse mix of thinkers, writers, and artists who challenge us to think deeply about freedom and liberation. We'll examine the multifaceted nature of the constraints that bind us and the various dimensions of freedom. We'll also investigate the tricky balance between individual freedom and collective well-being.

Through readings, discussions, and critical reflections, we'll appreciate the rich diversity of perspectives on what it means to be free. The course will encourage you to engage deeply with the material, debate various viewpoints, and develop your own understanding of freedom and liberation.

Authenticity

Professor Michael McCourt
HONR 1016:MV7 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24990
TR 1:00PM - 2:15PM

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HONR 1016:MV8 - 3 Credits
CRN: 28231
TR 2:45M - 4:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: A modern city often inherits much of its structure from the past, with new buildings grafted onto old foundations and new neighborhoods fit into old grids. This class explores the many ways in which this architectural analogy (borrowed from Descartes 1637) sheds light on political philosophy and human psychology. Our contemporary social and political arrangements are also largely the products of people and events that no longer exist. And many of the beliefs, goals, and values that are in your head right now are there because of something you read or heard from someone else. This raises two parallel challenges: First, how can we be sure that an inherited political arrangement is the right one for the society in which we now live? And, second, how can you be sure that the beliefs, values, and goals that are in your head right now are the beliefs that you genuinely wish to have in there? We will also ask whether or when it is warranted for a people to entirely dismantle their existing political system in order to build a new one from scratch, and also whether it's possible or advisable for an individual person to do something similar with her own belief system. To guide our discussion of these questions, we will read authors from a wide range of intellectual traditions, including anarchism, Buddhism, existentialism, feminism, Freudian psychoanalysis, classical liberalism, and Marxism.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Scientific Reasoning and Discovery

Revolutions in Astronomy

Professor Bethany Cobb Kung

HONR 1034:MV - 4 Credits

CRN: 28048

TR 9:00AM - 10:50AM

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HONR 1034:MV1 - 4 Credits

CRN: 28050

TR 11:00AM - 12:50PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- GPAC Oral Communication

Course Description: This course explores the history and frontiers of modern astronomy. In the 400 years since Galileo first turned his telescope toward the heavens, the science of astronomy has gone through numerous radical shifts in our understanding of the universe. We will examine these great paradigm shifts, starting with the Copernican revolution, through Hubble's discovery of the expanding universe, to topics in astrophysics that remain controversial and perplexing even today such as extrasolar planets, black holes, dark matter and dark energy. Both the concepts behind these astronomy revolutions and the associated physics will be emphasized (there is, however, no mathematics prerequisites and the math level will be confined to algebra). We will consider historical and scientific perspectives on who was behind these radical discoveries, what evidence supports each revolution, and how astronomers and society have responded to each advance. Students in this course will develop an understanding of the types of modern astronomical topics discussed frequently in the popular science press and media and will come to appreciate how the science of astronomy is performed. Students will be expected to take an active role in the classroom, where we will explore topics through a combination of lecture, discussion, student presentations, group projects and mathematical exercises.

Why Do We Get Sick? The Ecology and Evolution of Health and Disease

Professor Thiago Moreira

HONR 1034:MV2 - 4 Credits

CRN: 28056

MW 9:00AM - 10:50 AM

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HONR 1034:MV3 - 4 Credits

CRN: 28059

MW 1:00PM - 2:50PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- GPAC Oral Communication

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Course Description: “Did you ever wonder why we get sick? Or why do we get old? Have you ever considered why some people drink milk with ease while some others get strong reactions to it? Or why is it so hard to lose weight by dieting? Homo sapiens are one of the hundreds of thousands of life forms on this planet. We are subject to the same basic process that molds and shapes all living (and deceased) species: evolution. Millions of years of interacting with other species, adapting to an ever-changing landscape, and surviving the challenges of life have conferred upon us characteristics (adaptations) that help us thrive. The proof of success? Standing the test of time!

However, unlike other species, we humans transcend the natural challenges the planet gave to us. In a very short period, we transformed our surroundings into a more amenable, comfortable version. Challenges crucial to our ancestors (such as gathering food, finding shelter, or escaping predators) are not a problem for modern humans. Nevertheless, our old biological background is still with us, and it often does not like this new world... and stirs some trouble.

The first we will cover in this course are the very basics of biological evolution. What is evolution? What are the fundamental processes and patterns of life? What are the tenets and major areas of study of modern biology? Once we have a solid basis and are comfortable with the fundamentals, we will explore the topics of health and sickness in our modern lives from a new perspective. By the end of the semester, I hope you will have a broader comprehension of how our biology has evolved for thousands of years and their consequences have a great deal to offer our knowledge of a healthier life.

But more than evolution or health, this course is about science. Thus, I expect you to be already familiar with some concepts, such as scientific methods, errors, experimental design, and how to ask (and answer) meaningful scientific questions. So be prepared to use those skills you worked on in your Fall courses!”

Light and Color

Professor Tom Rice
HONR 1034:MV5 - 4 Credits
CRN: 28483
TR 9:00AM - 10:50 AM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- GPAC Oral Communication

Course Description: What is light? What is color? How do our sensory and aesthetic experiences of these phenomena compare with their role in the scientific enterprise? In this course we will explore light and color in our everyday life, blending an appreciation of their qualities in art and nature with a scientific perspective. We will explore prisms, spectrographs, thermal emission and atomic absorption, bringing our tangible experience of color together with a deeper understanding of how astronomers use color to understand the Universe, including through telescopes like NASA’s recently-launched JWST. Students will be expected to take an active role in the classroom, where we will explore topics through a combination of lecture, discussion, student presentations, group projects and mathematical exercises.

Will also include an observing component using the UHP’s brand new digital telescope!

Bio: Dr. Tom Rice is the Education and Mentoring Specialist at the American Astronomical Society (AAS) as well as an Assistant Research Professor of Physics at GW. In this role with the AAS, he works to make astronomy education more effective and inclusive.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Introductory and Special

Honors Macroeconomics

Professor Michael Bradley
HONR 2044:10 – 3 Credits
CRN: 20134
T 11:10AM - 12:25PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

Equivalent Courses: HONR 2047; ECON 1012

Course Description: Macroeconomic conditions affect everyone's lives. Many important social and political issues are framed by their macroeconomic consequences. In this course, students will learn how changes in macroeconomic conditions affect them, as well as learning what determines whether a country's economic performance is good or bad. We will also cover the economic consequences of important current issues like inequality, student debt relief, inflation, and the international trade deficit. Course prerequisites: ECON 1011

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Self & Society

Ambitious Multilateralism: Global Social Movements

Professor Laura Engel
HONR 2047:10 – 3 Credits
CRN: 23630
TR 11:10AM - 12:25PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

Course Description: It has been said that the challenges of our global interconnected and interdependent world require “an ambitious multilateralism” (Bautista, 2024). Different from the past, individuals around the world are encouraged to step outside of their local and/or national interests to explore, take part, and embody a shared agenda or set of activities with others; to champion a global vision of shared humanity; to tackle problems of a global scale. The 2030 Agenda, marked by 17 global goals, is one such global effort and movement aimed at sustainable development and the pursuit of peaceful, inclusive, just, and sustainable societies. The Sustainable Development Goals, comprised of 17 distinct, yet interrelated goals, offer the world a roadmap. The SDGs are not just a list of goals with targets and indicators but can also be understood as a global social movement, defined as networks of key actors that pursue and shape an agenda across national borders, are impactful on global governance, as well as national and local political agendas around the world. Unique amongst these movements is their global orientation, fueled in part by social media and other digital tools that allow for the rapid spread of information. Envisioned in the 2030 Agenda is multisectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches to global challenges. Yet, critiques abound – from the lofty nature of the goals to the agenda being driven only by select groups, classes, or global regions, undermining their mission of representative democracy and global Equity.

This class will provide an opportunity to delve more deeply into multilateralism, global governance, the United Nations system, and global social movements from an interdisciplinary and international orientation. It will focus on concepts like the transnational civil society, cross-border activism, global civil society, and grassroots globalization, and engage students in:

- (1) the study of the SDGs as a global movement;
- (2) a student-led project on how the SDGs are taking shape across different case studies and country systems;
- (3) whether and to what extent to which education systems worldwide are equipping young people with the tools to engage in understanding and taking part in different movements;
- (4) understanding the role that digital technologies and platforms have played in fueling the mobilization of the SDGs;

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

- (5) examining how multi-lateral organizations, such as UNESCO, are working to reimagine education systems toward global, digital citizenship;
- (6) debating whether the SDGs are additive to democracy in a global arena or leading toward democratic delay due to their own politics and purported lack of global representation.

Bio: [Dr. Laura Engel](#) is a Professor of International Education and International Affairs with GW's Graduate School of Education and Human Development. A recipient of GW's 2022 Morton A. Bender Teaching award, Dr. Engel's research interests focus on the influence of global education policy trends in national and regional systems.

Understanding Israel and Palestine

Professor Nathan Brown
HONR 2047:16 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24991
MW 12:45PM - 2:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

Course Description: This course is designed to familiarize students with Israeli and Palestinian societies--their politics, their histories, and the way the two interact. The course will not be oriented around "the" history or "the" conflict since those things are viewed so very differently by many of those most deeply concerned. Instead, the focus will be understanding how and why various groups of Israelis and Palestinians have experienced and understood matters they way that they have--and how this informs the actions of those groups. There is no academic prerequisite for the course but there will be a strong expectation that those enrolling in the class come prepared to treat respectfully--and even with curiosity--views very different from their own. Students with a strong background (and personal connection or commitment) are very much welcome and those who have little background knowledge (and no commitments at all) are very welcome as well. In addition to academic writings on history, society, and politics, the course will incorporate cultural materials and guest speakers and experts.

This course will allow students to explore a series of questions: How do key groups in Israeli and Palestinian societies understand history? What are the most important political actors and how have they evolved? How do they experience the present with its harsh political realities? What hopes and expectations do they have for the future?"

Bio: [Dr. Nathan Brown](#) is a Professor of Political Science and International Affairs. A recipient of GW's Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Award for Scholarship in 2015, his current work focuses on religion, law, and politics in the Arab world.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Cross-listed Honors courses

NOTE: Students must be registered in the HONR section in order to receive UHP credit. For courses that are cross-listed with another department, the UHP can add "credit" for a course to the student's DegreeMAP within the major and/or minor's requirements block. Students must have officially declared the major or minor with their respective school, and it must be reflected on their DegreeMAP at the time of the request. Students may also petition their school/major to accept HONR courses they find are relevant to their curriculum requirements. For any questions, please see a UHP Program Manager.

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Leading Authentically

Professor Gelaye Debebe
HONR 2047:12 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24397
W 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences This course has no GPAC designations
- ESIA: International Development (EFCE) course for declared majors/minors
- ESIA: International Politics: (EFCH) course for declared majors/minors

Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 24397)

Course cross-listed with IAFF 2040.80 (CRN: 28394)

Course Description: Leadership ability is in high demand in all professions and at all levels. This course is a semester-long exploration of leadership within a dynamic and supportive learning community. The course seeks to dispel myths of heroic leadership as well as common beliefs that conflate leadership with having a formal position of authority. Authentic leadership is a dynamic capability that is anchored in values, influenced by the social environment, and learned and honed with practice. Students will learn from seasoned leaders, formulate personal leadership development goals, experiment with new leadership behaviors and gain insights into their leadership strengths and weaknesses. These objectives will be accomplished through a variety of activities including results obtained through lectures, 360-degree feedback, peer leadership coaching, interviews with established leaders, film analysis, and presentations. After taking this course students will develop an understanding of leadership as an art and science. Each student will leave the course with a conceptual grasp of leadership, leadership practice, leadership effectiveness, ethical leadership, and the role of social identity in leadership. Equally important, by the end of the course, each student will understand their leadership strengths and areas for development and will have a clear understanding of what they can do to continue to grow and develop as leaders.

Bio: [Professor Gelaye Debebe](#) is a Associate Professor of Organizational Sciences and director of the graduate program in Organizational Science. She is passionate about teaching and researching leadership—check out her book: *Women's Leadership Development: Caring Environments & Paths to Transformation* (Routledge).

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Holocaust Memory

Professor Walter Reich
HONR 2047:83 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24993
W 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations
- CCAS: Upper-level History European Regional requirement
- ESIA: Comparative, Political, Economic, and Social Systems, Conflict Resolution, Contemporary Cultures and Societies, Europe and Eurasia, International Politics, Security Policy concentrations

Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 24993)

Course cross-listed with IAFF 3205.80 (CRN: 26980) and JSTD 2002.82 (CRN: 26317)

Course Description: The sources, construction, development, nature, uses and misuses of the memory, or public consciousness, of the Holocaust. How different publics in different countries, cultures and societies know, or think they know, about the Holocaust from diaries, memoirs, testimonies, fiction, documentaries, television, commercial films, memorials, museums, the Internet, educational programs and the statements of world leaders—some of them historically accurate and some of them highly distorted. The challenge of representing the Holocaust with fidelity and memorializing its victims with dignity and authenticity. The impact of Holocaust memory on contemporary responses to other genocides and to crimes against humanity. The increasing efforts to hijack, misuse, minimize, deny or attack the Holocaust for political, strategic, ideological, anti-Semitic or other purposes. The effectiveness—or lack of effectiveness—of Holocaust memory in teaching the Holocaust’s contemporary “lessons,” especially “Never again!” The roles of Holocaust memory, and of Holocaust denial or minimization, in international affairs, including in the Middle East in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

Bio: [Dr. Reich](#) is the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Professor of International Affairs, Ethics and Human Behavior and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. He formerly served as a Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Media, Power, and Society

Professor Steven Livingston
HONR 2047:84 – 3 Credits
CRN: 27280
TR 12:45PM - 2:20PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 27280)

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Course cross-listed with SMPA 3194.85 (CRN: 27273).

Course Description: This seminar considers democracy in the United States through the lens of social and economic power structures. Drawing on sociological and historical accounts, discussions are organized around a core hypothesis: Democratic decay is the consequence of endemic power disparities along class and racial lines. The seminar is also informed by the instructor's fieldwork in Michigan during the 2024 elections.

Bio: [Dr. Steven Livingston](#) is a Professor of Media and Public Affairs and International Affairs and is the Founding Director of the [Institute for Data, Democracy, and Politics](#). Dr. Livingston studies the role of digital technology in governance and the provisioning of public goods, including human security and rights.

Equality & the Law: Introduction to Legal Research and Writing

Professor Zachary Wolfe
HONR 2047W: 80 – 3 Credits
CRN: 28232
MW 4:45PM – 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- WID requirement
- This course has no GPAC designations
- CCAS: Law & Society minor requirement

Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 28232)

Course cross listed with UW 2031W.10 (CRN: 24411)

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to how lawyers and legal scholars research and write about specific disputes that arise in the context of complex social issues. It is one of the required courses for the [minor in law and society](#) and satisfies a WID requirement.

Legal writing, like all forms of scholarly writing, is best understood in context and in practice. In this course, we have the opportunity to explore an ongoing challenge to our society in general and the legal system in particular: the promise of equality, and how government relates to it. We do so by examining judicial decisions, statutes, regulations, and law review articles concerning matters related to race, sexual orientation and gender, disability, and others issues that continue to advance major challenges to the system's ability to realize legal and civil equality. That examination requires an understanding of legal audience expectations as well as the ability to use specialized research techniques and craft written analysis in particular forms, so students will learn about the nuances of argument in the interdisciplinary field of law and the unique requirements of legal research and writing.

Bio: [Professor Wolfe](#) teaches writing courses themed around law and social movements and an advanced Writing in the Disciplines course in legal writing. After obtaining his Juris Doctorate from The George Washington University Law School, he practiced public interest law for several years and eventually began teaching part-time. Although he's been a

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

full-time professor for a number of years, he continues to practice law to a limited extent, mostly by consulting on cases and filing an occasional amicus brief. He is an active legal writer, including as the author of the fourth edition and quarterly updates to the seminal [Farnsworth on Contracts](#) and of annual editions of [Hate Crimes Law](#). More info (and Supreme Court tips!) are on [profzwolfe.com](#).

Epidemics in American History

Professor Vanessa Northington Gamble
HONR 2047W: 82 – 3 Credits
CRN: 28733
MW 12:45PM – 2:00PM

Fulfills:

- WID requirement
- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 28733)

Course cross listed with AMST 4701W.80 (CRN: 28739) and HIST 3301W.80 (CRN: 28737).

Course Description: This course surveys the history of epidemics in the United States from the late nineteenth century to today. It examines the development of the medical and public health responses to epidemics and the social, political, cultural, and economic impact of epidemics on American history and culture. This semester we will focus on the 1918 influenza epidemic; race, ethnicity, and epidemic disease; polio; and the tensions between public health and civil liberties, including the development of anti-vaccination sentiments. We will use primary documents, historical accounts, museum visits, and films to understand the history of these diseases and topics. Of course, we will conduct our study of the history of epidemics in the shadow of the contemporary COVID-19 pandemic. However, we will not focus on COVID-19 in this class.

Bio: [Prof. Gamble](#) is University Professor of Medical Humanities and Professor of American Studies. A physician, scholar, and activist, Dr. Gamble is an internationally recognized expert on the history of American medicine, racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care, public health ethics, and bioethics. She chaired the committee that took the lead role in the successful campaign to obtain an apology in 1997 from President Clinton for the United States Public Health Syphilis Study at Tuskegee.

Her many honors include appointment to the National Council on Humanities; election as a Fellow of the Hastings Center; membership on the Penn Med Board; an honorary degree from SUNY Upstate Medical University; and the Distinguished Graduate Award from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. A proud native of West Philadelphia, Dr. Gamble is an elected member of the prestigious National Academy of Medicine.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Arts & Humanities

Language and Law

Professor Michael McCourt
HONR 2053:12 – 3 Credits
CRN: 28484
TR 9:35AM - 10:50AM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: This course pursues questions that arise at the intersection of political philosophy, legal studies, and linguistics. First, speech is used to persuade voters and citizens. But not all persuasive speech is morally equal, as we see in cases of propaganda or the use of "dog whistles." This course will study the different forms that persuasive speech can take, evaluating real world examples with tools from moral philosophy, linguistics, and the philosophy of language. Second, laws are expressed in a linguistic medium, raising familiar challenges when it comes to their interpretation. For example, if laws are texts, who are their authors? Also, should we interpret laws relative to the context in which they were written, or our contemporary context? We'll pursue such questions by applying tools from linguistics and the philosophy of language to case studies drawn from the courts. Third, there are laws that protect rights to speech, as well as laws that regulate the exercise of that right. So, we will discuss the value of "free speech" and the justification of laws that regulate the use of language.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A History

Professor Christopher Brick
HONR 2053:13 – 3 Credits
CRN: 25635
TR 12:45PM - 2:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the world's most recognizable documents, "the foundation of international human rights law," according to the United Nations, and one of the most widely-reprinted texts in human history. While its framers theorized the UDHR as a "Magna Carta for all," opponents and detractors have routinely cast it instead as an empty vessel, at best, and at worst a dangerous tool of oppression. Is it either of these things, neither, or something else entirely? This course will invite students to consider these questions anew as it examines the Declaration's conceptual origins in the ancient past, the historical context that led the UN General Assembly to formalize and promulgate a human rights coda in 1948, and the UDHR's colorful evolution into a flashpoint of controversy for activists, policymakers, intellectuals, and the international community writ large. Please note that in researching their term projects for this course, students will be required to draw upon resources from the permanent collection of the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, a research center of the GW History Department and archive of UDHR materials that UNESCO has designated "vital to global heritage and personhood."

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Bio: [Dr. Brick](#) is an editor and principle investigator of the [Eleanor Roosevelt Papers project](#) at GW and one of the hosts of the Organization of American Historians' podcast [Intervals](#).

Music in Film, Film on Music

Professor Douglas Boyce
HONR 2053:14 – 3 Credits
CRN: 28065
TR 9:35AM - 10:50AM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

Course Description: In "Music in Film, Film on Music" we engage with films' playful manipulation of audiences' feelings and expectations through its use of music and representation of music making. This course has no prerequisite besides an interest in film (and in the arts in general). We develop analytic skills and terminological fluency through the descriptions of shots, scenes, scores, leitmotifs, and other tools of filmmakers, and question how filmmakers use these devices to support and articulate ideologies, structures of thinking around genius, race, gender, and the nature of music itself. This happens through the study of mainstream movies, indie films, and avant-garde cinema, ranging from Forman's 'Amadeus,' Gray's 'Straight Outta Compton', Wright's 'Pride and Prejudice', Satyajit Ray's 'The Music Room (Jalsaghar)', and Bela Tarr's 'Werckmeister Harmonies', among others.

Students develop mastery of these concepts and terminology through seminar discussions and individual and group projects; these lead toward projects on the ideological, historical, cultural, and philosophical entailments of individually chosen films, presented on video, shared with the class in an end-of-semester collective reflection on both the role of music in film, but our received beliefs as to the nature of music itself.

Bio: [Dr. Douglas Boyce](#) is a Professor of Music in GW's Corcoran School of the Arts & Design. He writes chamber music that draws on Renaissance traditions and modernist aesthetics, building rich rhythmic structures that shift between order, fragmentation, elegance, and ferocity.

Cross-listed Honors courses

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Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Hatred on Trial

Professor Jenna Weissman Joselit
HONR 2053:80– 3 Credits
CRN: 28233
M 3:30PM – 5:25PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 28233)

Course cross listed with HIST 2001.81 (CRN: 27877)

Course Description: This seminar explores the public face of prejudice by looking at a series of landmark trials and courtroom dramas that span the 15th century through our own day. Through a series of case studies that draw on the law, popular culture, art and technology, it examines the ways in which legal institutions in the US and abroad were complicit in the dissemination and legitimation of racist beliefs and practices – and now and again, successfully refuted and overturned them as well. A timely consideration of an evergreen topic.

Bio: [Dr. Joselit](#) is the Charles E. Smith Professor of Judaic Studies & Professor of History. Among her many areas of academic study, she specializes in the history and culture of America's Jews and also writes a monthly column on American Jewish culture for Tablet: The Online Magazine of Jewish Culture.

The Crisis of Liberalism

Professor Daniel Schwartz
HONR 2053:81 – 3 Credits
CRN: 28234
MW 3:45PM – 5:00PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 28234)

Course cross listed with HIST 2001.89 (CRN: 27906) and JSTD 2002.83 (CRN: 28261)

Course Description: What is liberalism? Is there a 'crisis of liberalism' occurring in the United States, as well as around the world? If liberalism is in crisis, what are the features of this disorder and what are possible responses? Is it possible to believe in the further progress of liberal societies, or have they fallen into a decadent condition? These are some of the key questions we will explore in this course. We will devote the first half of the semester to studying the foundations of liberalism, early challenges to liberalism from its right and left flanks, and 20th-century developments in liberal thought from the Progressives to the political theorist John Rawls. The second half of the

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

semester will focus on the period from the Revolutions of 1989 to the present age of crisis, in which critics on the right and left are waging war against a beleaguered liberalism, and the future of liberal democracy hangs in the balance.

Bio: [Dr. Daniel Schwartz](#) is a Professor of History. Dr. Schwartz specializes in modern European and American Jewish intellectual, cultural, and urban history and was recently named a fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

Dialectic and Dialogue

Professor Joseph Trullinger
HONR 2053:82 – 3 Credits
CRN: 24398
TR 9:35AM - 10:50AM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities
- Philosophy: Declared majors/minors see department

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 24398)

Course cross listed with PHIL 3100.10 (CRN: 27302)

Course Description: This course is about the philosophy of dialogue, asking such questions as: what are the conditions for *genuine* dialogue, and not the trite lip-service beloved by focus groups and PR campaigns? can dialogue be of any use when your oppressor sees you as subhuman? and so on. It is also a course about philosophy *as* dialogue—for instance, a dialogue in writing, or between written “fragments,” and so on.

This course on dialectic and dialogue will be a sustained exploration of how reality, no less than the mind exploring it, is inherently *dynamic*. It takes as its starting-point that nothing is “plain and simple”: reality is always *realization*. The Truth is not simply “out there,” as a readymade, but unfolds in a process that makes no sense without a process of involvement that transforms us as we climb out of what Plato called “the cave” of half-truth. This liberation never happens alone; only together can any of us live truthfully. As it turns out, the commonplace failure to engage in this process perpetuates a kind of mischief in our social relations, enabling political despotism, religious dogmatism, racist and sexist discrimination, and many other forms of self-blindness that dehumanize the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Thus this course will show how social justice is woven together with metaphysics, epistemology is woven together with the ethics of dialogue, substance is woven together with style, and philosophy is woven together with art, seeing each together in *con-text* (literally, “woven together” in Latin). We will see these common threads running through a few emblematic works from two overlapping philosophical canons, the tradition of Greco-Germanic idealism and the tradition of Black radical thought, putting those traditions *themselves* into a dialogue with one another, in what will hopefully be a productive tension. The results of that dialectic, we aim to discover in the experiment of this course.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Nietzsche & Political Thought

Professor William Winstead
HONR 2053:83 – 3 Credits
CRN: 26001
T 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities
- CCAS: 2000-level Political Science Course Elective Group E

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 26001)

Course cross listed with PSC 2991.80 (CRN: 25903)

Course Description: Nietzsche is a fierce critic of modern politics and a relentless advocate of the agonistic politics of the Greek citystate. He argues that modern politics is beset by decay, evident in the slackening of citizen vigor (or will-power) and the timidity of the age's most powerful political movements, above all liberalism and socialism. We will begin our course this semester with Nietzsche's antidote to modern politics, the vigorous politics of the ancient Greek polis, which serves as the normative model for all of his writings. By embracing the Greeks, and particularly the tragic Greeks, Nietzsche turns away from modern rationalism and the systematic political philosophy inaugurated by Plato in favor of an experiment in new modes of political thinking that are at once anti-modern and post-modern. After considering Nietzsche's image of antiquity, we will turn to his interpretation of modernity and its political forms, and examine his critique of the political ideals of the age (liberalism, equality, and rights). Throughout the semester, we will pay close attention to the relationships that Nietzsche draws between art and politics, culture and the state, justice and rights, and freedom and asceticism.

NYC: City of Immigrants

Professor Jenna Weissman Joselit
HONR 2053:84 – 3 Credits
CRN: 25776
M 3:30PM – 5:20PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 25776)

Course cross listed with HIST 2001.82 (CRN:27875)

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Course Description: This interdisciplinary seminar explores one of the world's most fabled cities and how, over time, it came by its reputation. Taking in some of the city's well-known touristic sights and sounds, it pays especially close attention to the ways in which immigration shaped its distinctive urban fabric. With the neighborhood as its frame, the course encompasses the Lower East Side and Harlem, Chinatown and Williamsburg. There'll be many highlights along the way – wonderful readings, special guests, a dance class - culminating in a visit to the Tenement House Museum, with which the students will also be collaborating on a semester-long project. New York City: Here we come!

Bio: [Dr. Joselit](#) is the Charles E. Smith Professor of Judaic Studies & Professor of History. Among her many areas of academic study, she specializes in the history and culture of America's Jews and also writes a monthly column on American Jewish culture for [Tablet: The Online Magazine of Jewish Culture](#).

Buddhist Philosophy

Professor Eyal Aviv
HONR 2053:85 – 3 Credits
CRN: 26270
TR 2:20PM – 3:25PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities
- Philosophy: Declared majors/minors see department

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 26270)

Course cross listed with PHIL 3100.81 (CRN: 26318) and REL 3614.81 (CRN: 26735)

Course Description: In this course, you will be introduced to the philosophy of Buddhism, its assumptions, questions, and distinct perspectives. You'll learn about the Buddhist intellectual tradition, its ideas, and debates, as well as how its philosophy evolved over time. While the course covers Buddhist Philosophy throughout history, we'll focus especially on the School of Yogic Practice (Yogācāra). Additionally, we will take a comparative philosophy approach to highlight differences and similarities with the Western philosophical and psychological traditions. We will pay particular attention to the relevance of these questions to our daily lives and their transformative impact.

Social Change and Storytelling Arts: Performance Narratives and Public History

Professor Kerric Harvey
HONR 2053:88 – 3 Credits
CRN: 26002
TR 2:20PM – 3:35PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 26002)

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Course cross listed with SMPA 3194.84 (CRN: 27768) and SMPA 3195.84 (CRN: 27770)

Course Description: This hybrid classroom and practicum course explores the history, effectiveness, and best practices of using a wide range of the performative arts -- screen media, audio drama, comedy sketches, and live theatre -- as types of strategic communication for addressing social justice issues. We'll begin by looking at the range of ways in which narrative has always found its way into public dialogue about eruptive social issues, asking questions such as: "When is storytelling a better educative and/or empathy-building tool than other types of communication?" Who gets to decide which version of a historically-based story is the 'right one' to use as the backbone for a play, film, museum exhibit, or spoken word piece," What responsibility do I, as a storyteller, have to bear in mind when I'm writing something essentially fictional in nature, but based on true events?" "Is music a type of storytelling? How about historical walking tours? Are museum exhibits a type of narrative, including themed eating in culture specific museums cafes, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) and The American Indian Museum" and, in preparation for their final projects: "How do I know which form of storytelling is best suited for my own social change goals in any particular instance?"

Interwoven with this classroom-based material will be a variety of trips to several D.C. museums, art galleries, historical properties, public art spaces, and storytelling venues, including but not limited to the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Portrait Gallery, the Tudor Place Historic House and Gardens, the Oak Hill Cemetery, the National Museum of African Art, the Freer Gallery, the National Building Museum, at least one D.C. or Alexandria historical walking tour, at least one D.C. area ghost tour, The Octagon House, the Decatur House, and Anderson House. In particular, we'll work closely with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, spending significant time exploring the degree to which several of their unique exhibits can/could/should/should not be translated into the performative versions of themselves.

What happens to the credibility of a photograph when it "becomes" a spoken word performance? Can we transform a Motown song into a ten-minute play and still preserve the things that made that song unique, timely, and precious in the first place? Does an historical artifact lose its power when it gets turned into a ten-minute play? Can the annual Chinese New Year parade be turned into song lyrics without losing its special balance of exuberance and dignity? And how would we even go about doing any of these things, in the first place?

Exploring these questions both in the classroom and out in the city, students will apply this conceptual material in a practical, hands-on way, creating their own original storytelling narrative as an integral part of the course. No previous scriptwriting or related type of creative expertise is required.

Bio: [Dr. Kerric Harvey](#) is an Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs as well as a working playwright and multimedia producer. Dr. Harvey writes about the media arts and cultural archetype in the public imagination, the anthropological effects of new media technologies, digital storytelling and the relationship between new media narratives and political identity.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Plato of Athens

Professor Mark Ralkowski
HONR 2053:89 – 3 Credits
CRN: 25340
W 12:45PM – 3:15PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities
- GPAC Oral Communications
- Philosophy: Declared majors/minors see department

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 25340)

Course cross listed with PHIL 4198.10 (CRN: 25003)

Course Description: Most people read Plato when they are introduced to philosophy. A few fall in love right away. Others respect and tolerate him, recognizing his importance. Many don't like him at all and are happy to move on with whatever is next on the syllabus. In the end, many feel they've learned the basics: "the Forms, the immortal soul, philosopher kings—got it." The purpose of this seminar is to reintroduce you to Plato, to understand why Hegel called him the foremost "teacher of the human race," why Emerson said "Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato," and why Whitehead said that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

We will begin by studying Plato's 7th Letter and Gorgias. This will give us a sense of why Plato wrote Socratic dialogues and how he responded to the trial of Socrates by putting the city of Athens on trial with a blistering critique of culture. The middle part of the class will be devoted to scholarly readings of the Symposium, Plato's most beautiful dialogue, and the Republic, his greatest and most influential work, which deconstructs the corrupt democratic city of Athens and rebuilds it on philosophical foundations. In the final part of this class, we will look at three later dialogues—the Parmenides, Timaeus, and Sophist—to track how Plato's metaphysical and epistemological theories, first introduced in dialogues like the Republic and Symposium, developed over time as he responded to criticisms from his student Aristotle. We will conclude by reading a recent book called Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won't Go Away and reflect on the relevance of Plato's ideas and attitudes for our own time.

Slow Reading Virginia Woolf

Professor Jennifer Green-Lewis
HONR 2053:90 – 3 Credits
CRN: 27248
MW 12:45PM – 2:00PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 27248)

Course cross listed with ENGL 3210.80 (CRN: 23324)

Course Description: In this course we'll slow-read three of Virginia Woolf's extraordinary novels, as well as a number of her essays and other writings, and we'll learn what it means to read like a writer. We will discuss things both tiny (such as the comma) and vast (such as human consciousness). We will consider how Woolf draws on the visual arts, her preoccupation with beauty, and the relationship in her novels between memory and identity. Assignments will be creative as well as analytical. Books you will need to buy, all by Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway*; *To the Lighthouse*; *The Waves* (all HBJ editions); *Selected Essays* (Oxford World's Classics); *Moments of Being* (Harvest); *A Writer's Diary* (Harvest). Please also buy a journal in which to keep your own writer's diary.

Bio: [Dr. Green-Lewis](#) is a Professor of English. She specializes in nineteenth and early-twentieth century British literature and considers how literary questions may be illuminated and recast through consideration of the visual arts, especially photography.

Introduction to Critical Theory

Professor Alexa Joubin
HONR 2053W:80 – 3 Credits
CRN: 26869
TR 2:20PM – 3:35PM

Fulfills:

- WID Course
- This course has no GPAC designations

Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 26869)

Course cross listed with ENGL 2800W.81 (CRN: 21725)

Course Description: Through the lens of social justice, this course examines critical theory in the context of cinematic representations of embodied identities. In particular, we will focus on theories of racialized bodies, performance of sexuality, trans / feminist interventions, and intersectional identities in pop culture. We focus on theories that are most relevant to our contemporary political and cultural life. Students will gain fluency in the conceptual frameworks associated with feminist, critical race, and queer studies. More importantly, students will learn how to apply theoretical tools to global films in the interest of producing scholarship that instigates changes.

Bio: [Dr. Joubin](#) is a Professor of English, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Theatre, International Affairs, and East Asian Languages and Cultures. Her recent books include *Shakespeare and East Asia* and an open-access interactive textbook entitled [Screening Shakespeare](#), and she was awarded GW's 2022 Trachtenberg Prize for Scholarship.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Contract Courses

Honors Internship

Professor Chosen by Student

HONR 2182:10 - 0 to 4 Credits

Course Description: Students who secure an internship placement can get academic credit by arranging a faculty-supervised project related to their internship. Students must submit an Honors Contract. Please see a Program Manager for further information.

Honors Undergraduate Research

Professor Chosen by Student

HONR 2184:10 - 0 to 4 Credits

Course Description: Students working on original research or on another research project can get academic credit by working closely with a faculty mentor. Students must submit an Honors Contract. Please see a Program Manager for further information.

Honors Research Assistantship

Professor Chosen by Student

HONR 2185:10 - 0 to 4 Credits

Course Description: Students who secure a research assistantship with a faculty member can receive academic credit by completing their assistantship duties. Students must submit an Honors Contract. Please see a Program Manager for further information.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Senior Capstone and Thesis

Honors Senior Thesis

Professor Chosen by Student

HONR 4198 - 3 to 4 credits

Course Description: The Honors Senior Thesis is a one or two-semester independent study to complete a senior thesis. This course is for students who are NOT completing a thesis within their department of major. Any student considering the Honors Senior Thesis option should contact an Honors Program Manager. This course is only open to Seniors and requires a completed Honors Contract to register. Please see a Program Manager for further information.

The Happiness Industry

Professor Joseph Trullinger

HONR 4199:10 – 1 Credit

CRN: 28066

T 4:00PM - 6:00PM

This section will meet on January 21, 28 and February 4, 11.

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HONR 4199:13 – 1 Credit

CRN: 28070

R 4:00PM - 6:00PM

This section will meet on January 23, 30 and February 6, 13.

Course Description: This capstone centers on a central irony of our era: everywhere we look we find psychologists, advertisers, city planners, pharmaceutical companies, politicians, life coaches, self-help gurus, economists, sociologists, neuroscientists, spiritual leaders, and seekers of every type willing to help us be happier...and yet nobody can quite pin down what happiness is. This capstone explores the philosophical and scientific reasons why happiness eludes measurement, and the social reasons why businesses and governments are nonetheless so deeply invested in the idea that happiness can be quantified. The happiness industry touches on every aspect of our lives, and William Davies' 2015 interdisciplinary book of the same title will guide our class through this industry's history and limitations. Thinking critically about the immeasurability of happiness will (hopefully) help us reclaim happiness from those who would determine it for us.

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

Art of Love

Professor William Winstead
HONR 4199:11 – 1 Credit
CRN: 28067
W 7:00PM – 9:00PM

This course will meet on February 5, 12, 19, & 26.

Course Description: Love and work have rightly been described as the great defining activities of our lives. Of the two, love is undoubtedly the more difficult and by far the more fascinating. Love gives meaning to our lives, brings ecstasies and sorrows, and entangles itself in thorny questions of power, possession, knowledge, and truth. If love often seems to liberate, it just as often threatens to enslave. What is love? How is it practiced? What are its historical forms? Is human happiness ultimately dependent upon deep and abiding love? Must love involve submission and possession? These questions and others will inform our capstone seminar this year as we discuss a selection of the most illuminating visions of love through the ages. Readings will include Plato, Freud, de Beauvoir, Ovid, Fromm, and bell hooks.

Is Love Really Such a Good Thing?

Professor Mark Ralkowski
HONR 4199:12 – 1 Credit
CRN: 28070
R 4:00PM - 6:00PM

This course will meet on April 3, 10, 17, & 24.

Course Description: “I would never want to belong to any club that would have someone like me for a member. That’s the key joke in my adult life, in terms of my relationships with women” (Woody Allen, Annie Hall). We will begin and end this little seminar by asking whether this joke tells us anything important about love. Our discussions will not be aimed at any final answers about the nature of love. How could they be? Our only goal will be to think freely, with the help of great literature and film, about love’s aspirations and desires, its special kind of knowledge, its profound risks, and its unusual powers. We will read one little novel (a light read, but full of insight rooted in psychoanalysis and philosophy), a book on “the female search for love” by bell hooks, and a short book on the Buddhist art of loving by Thich Nhat Hanh. Our experience will be organized around four serious conversations, and there will be a dinner at the end, which we will enjoy while discussing a beautiful movie. Please come prepared to read carefully and talk a lot!

Spring 2025 Course Descriptions



Meditation

Professor Eyal Aviv
HONR 4199:14 – 1 Credit
CRN: 28236
M 6:00PM - 8:00PM

This course will meet on January 27 and February 8.

Course Description: Stress, anxiety, and exhaustion have become inevitable in modern life, especially in college. In this capstone, we will practice several Buddhist meditative techniques that proved successful antidotes for stress. We will learn to cultivate states of mind that lead to insight, spaciousness, and joy. The capstone will include two meetings: One preparatory meeting and the second time for a day-long (9 am - 5 pm) experience in a beautiful Buddhist meditation center in rural Maryland. We will meet with the local monks, read and discuss texts, practice different forms of meditation, and enjoy food and nature. The day-long meditation experience will be on a Saturday, February 8th. A bus will take us and bring us back. **Please note that this capstone requires a \$25 fee, payable to the Honors Program main office in January (if you would like to participate in this capstone but the fee represents a financial hardship, please speak with Prof. Aviv).**