

Course Descriptions

University Honors Program

Fall 2023

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# Fall 2023 Course Descriptions

## Origins and Evolution of Modern Thought

### Justice

Professor Theodore Christov

HONR 1015:MV - 4 Credits

CRN 41321

MW 8:30AM - 9:45AM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M30, M 11:30AM – 12:20PM (CRN: 41690)

Fulfills:

- UW 1020
- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**Course Description:** What is the right thing to do? The perennial quest for justice remains a persistent concern across time, place, and cultures, from antiquity to the present. Ancient thinkers—from the West and beyond—faced problems that we, after two and a half millennia, may recognize as our very own. To explore this question, we will grapple with some major works in ancient thought and engage in political and moral theorizing in the making of a good life. How should we confront the limits of our existence, and are we sufficiently equipped to understand the human condition? Our common aim will be to discuss significant and recurrent questions of moral and political value that arise in human experience in order to enlarge our awareness of how people have understood the nature of the just and virtuous life. In addressing the themes of justice, equality, democracy, and citizenship, our readings will be derived from the Western and non-Western intellectual traditions in order to understand the formative forces that shaped the political and moral universe we inhabit today.

### Well-Being

Professor Eyal Aviv

HONR 1015:MV2 - 4 Credits

CRN 47612

TR 2:30PM - 3:45PM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M32, T 4:00PM – 4:50PM (CRN: 47843)

Fulfills:

- UW 1020
- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**Course Description:** Ancient thinkers followed the command of the oracle of Delphi "know thyself!" They saw life as a path of self-discovery and believed that living right would result in a state of Eudaemonia (Well-Being). During this fall semester, we will explore the oracle's ancient call. We will reflect upon the different visions of Well-Being, on the conditions that create them, on a society that fosters such life and how one should contribute to such a society. We will do so through engaging with some of the most fascinating Western and non-Western thinkers and writers in ancient world history, from the Hellenistic, Daoist, Confucian, and Buddhist schools, among others.

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## Control

Professor Joseph Trullinger  
HONR 1015:MV4 - 4 Credits  
CRN 41415

MW 1:00PM - 2:15PM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M34, W 4:10PM – 5:00PM (CRN: 41692)

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HONR 1015:MV5 - 4 Credits  
CRN 45367

MW 2:30PM - 3:45PM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M35, W 5:00PM – 5:50PM (CRN: 45366)

Fulfills:

- UW 1020
- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**Course Description:** What do you do with control once you have it? Everywhere we find examples of people straining to gain or keep control of situations, but we seldom stop to ask why they seek this in the first place. This seminar will foster such reflection through an intensive study of these questions as posed by the artists, historians, leaders, and thinkers of the ancient world. Who gets to be in control of your life, and why? Are we better off not being in control of nature? Does sharing control stabilize governments, or does democracy actually promote fickleness and corruption? What does it mean to have self-control, and is it worth having? What if there is no “self” to be controlled to begin with? By exploring classical conceptions of control, we will appreciate how modern thoughts evolve from ancient origins.

## The Good Life

Professor William Winstead  
HONR 1015:MV6 - 4 Credits  
CRN 46503

MW 1:00PM - 2:15PM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M36, M 2:30PM – 3:20PM (CRN: 46502)

Fulfills:

- UW 1020
- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**Course Description:** How may we flourish in a complex and ever-changing world? What constitutes a good life in the fullest sense? Does an authentic life depend principally upon virtue, reason, or happiness? What role should pleasure, desire, and love play in a life well lived? The question of “the good life” and its achievement is the principle theme of antiquity in both the Western and Eastern traditions. Philosophers, poets, historians, and political leaders contribute richly to the debate, often with sharply conflicting solutions to the perennial problem of realizing an authentic, meaningful existence. Our readings this semester will come from both Eastern and Western traditions, and include texts from the Greek (Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato), Chinese (Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Zhuangzi), and Indian (Buddha) traditions.

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Our discussions will be guided by fundamental questions: How ought I live? What is good (and, equally, what is bad or evil)? What is human nature? What is justice or a just community? What is knowledge or wisdom? Throughout the semester, our discussions will be collective, critical, and open-ended.

## Wisdom

Professor Mark Ralkowski  
HONR 1015:MV8 - 4 Credits  
CRN 42268

TR 1:00PM - 2:15PM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M38, R 2:30PM – 3:20PM (CRN: 42267)

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HONR 1015:MV9 – 4 Credits  
CRN 43413

TR 10:00AM - 11:15AM

Discussion Section: HONR 1015:M39, R 11:30AM – 12:20PM (CRN: 43448)

Fulfills:

- UW 1020
- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**Course Description:** What is happiness, and how can I live a life that will make me happy? What is justice, and how can we reshape our institutions, as well as our own choices and lives, so that they better reflect it? Is love really such a good thing? Is democracy really the best form of government? Why is there anything at all, rather than nothing? And perhaps most difficult of all: how should I cope with the fact that I am going to suffer and die, along with everyone I love most? These are among the earliest questions asked by human beings in ancient Greece, Rome, China, and India, and most of them remain relevant to us today. In this seminar, we will use concepts from each of these traditions to challenge the way we think about everything, from what is valuable and worth pursuing in life to the ultimate nature of the world we live in, the human place in nature, how society ought to be organized and governed, and our obligations to one another. You will learn how to read famous works written or inspired by influential figures such as Plato, the Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Marcus Aurelius. And you will grow as an elegant writer and a confident public speaker. One of the main goals of this seminar is for you to discover that philosophy is a practice that can enhance all of our studies in college and activities in life, that it can help us live more authentically and engage more freely with our cultural values. As Socrates once said, “We are studying no small matter, but how we ought to live.”

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## Scientific Reasoning and Discovery

### Life: A Journey Through Earth's Biodiversity

Professor Thiago Moreira  
HONR 1033:MV - 4 Credits  
CRN 41791  
MW 9:00AM - 10:50AM

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HONR 1033:MV1 - 4 Credits  
CRN 41413  
MW 1:00PM - 2:50PM

#### Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- CCAS: GPAC Local/Civic Engagement

**Course Description:** “A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.” — John James Audubon

Are you alive? What is it to be alive? What are the limits of life? How diverse is life? Our planet is brimming with life. From the depths of the oceans to the tallest mountains, we find different life forms. Some beautiful, some scary, some intriguing, and some... weird. But all amazing. To understand better the lifeforms around us and how they connect to the planet is to understand ourselves better. In this course, we will explore life on our planet in a broad aspect. We will explore the major groups of living things and how they come to be. How different lifeforms are interconnected, and how they relate and interact with other. How life started and (almost) ended (several times!). We will use modern biological theory to get foundational knowledge about the sciences that explore biodiversity and its relations with the planet. We will study how we use science and its methodologies to recognize, describe and catalog the several different lifeforms on the planet and how to use this knowledge to ask meaningful, scientific questions about life. Once we have a solid basis, we can permit ourselves to ponder a bit about the most theoretical and philosophical aspects of life: when does life start? When does it end? Are we alone in the universe? How can we recognize alien life when (or if) we ever find some? By the end of our encounters, you will have a deeper understanding of life on Earth, its varieties, and the importance of preserving it for future generations.

### Physics of Everything

Professor Naveen Jha  
HONR 1033:MV2 - 4 Credits  
CRN 48382  
MW 3:00PM – 4:50PM

#### Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- CCAS: GPAC Local/Civic Engagement

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**Course Description:** While we may not often think about it, physics plays a significant role in all of our day-to-day lives. From the simple actions we take while riding a bike or throwing a ball, to the complex systems and technology that make modern life possible (such as airplanes, iPhones, and MRIs), the fundamentals of physics are everywhere. This course will engage you in recognizing, understanding and appreciating how physics has driven the development of our modern society over the last century. We will focus on inventions and concepts that we encounter daily or those that were especially revolutionary for their time, considering both their historical importance and understanding the physical principles behind each. How we move, communicate, and use technology will be explored! Specific topics include, for example, the steam engine, cars & airplanes, computers & smartphones, X-rays/ultrasounds & MRIs, nuclear weapons, lasers, and even musical instruments. This course includes hands-on labs and activities to help build understanding of the concepts and principles being discussed and students will be expected to actively participate in the classroom. Alongside the development of scientific literacy, the course will include mathematical problem solving (confined to algebra and geometry) to build numeracy. Through laboratory experiments, students will gain familiarity with the modern scientific method, including drawing logical conclusions and analyzing sources of scientific uncertainty.

**Bio:** Dr. Jha is a biophysicist specializing in live-cell imaging. He currently serves as an instructor and lab coordinator in the GW Department of Physics and previously worked as a fellow in the Department of Hematology at the FDA and with the Johns Hopkins Institute of Human Virology.

## Energy

Professor Bethany Cobb Kung

HONR 1033:MV4 - 4 Credits

CRN 41411

TR 9:00AM - 10:50 AM

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HONR 1033:MV7 - 4 Credits

CRN 42105

TR 11:00AM - 12:50PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- CCAS: GPAC Local/Civic Engagement

**Course Description:** Our lives are a complex web of energy, yet we never give energy much thought. Only when energy resources (e.g. oil, solar, nuclear) become big news do people start paying attention. But how can we be savvy consumers of energy rhetoric without a basic understanding of the fundamental physics of energy? This course will serve as an introduction to the physics of energy, from the basics, e.g. kinetic vs. potential energy, to more complex issues such as energy production, storage and transportation. We will explore alternative energy sources such as solar and nuclear energy. Topics to be covered will include:

- \* The physics of energy: work, power, heat, electromagnetic radiation, electricity
- \* Energy storage and transportation: fuels, batteries, the electrical grid
- \* Nuclear physics: atoms, quantum mechanics, fission and fusion
- \* Energy resources: coal, wind, alternative fuels, solar, nuclear

Throughout the course, students will also tackle the fundamentals of science including the scientific method, experimentation, and error measurement. Quantitative analysis will be emphasized to help build problem solving

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abilities and mathematical intuition (mathematics will be confined to algebra and geometry). This course is designed to increase student scientific curiosity and science literacy. Students will be expected to take an active role in the classroom, where we will explore these topics through lecture, discussion, debate, writing, experimentation, group projects and mathematical exercises.

## Your Place in Nature

Professor Bernard Wood  
HONR 1033:12 - 4 Credits  
CRN 43259  
TR 11:10AM - 1:00PM

### Fulfills:

- GPAC Scientific Reasoning (natural/physical science with lab)
- CCAS: GPAC Local/Civic Engagement

**Course Description:** The course will compare and contrast what was known about 'Man's Place in Nature' in 1863 with what we think we know now. It will cover the history of ideas about our relationship with the rest of the natural world, how we work out how animals are related, the fossil record for human evolution and the growth of the sciences involved in the interpretation of that fossil record. It will explore the social and intellectual context of relevant discoveries as well as the biographies of the people who made major contributions to working out the relationships among the great apes and to the recovery and interpretation of the fossil evidence for human evolution.

**Bio:** Dr. Wood, a physician, surgeon and paleoanthropologist, is the University Professor of Human Origins and a Professor of Evolutionary Anatomy. As a medical student, he joined Richard Leakey on an expedition and he has been pursuing research into paleoanthropology ever since, using fossil records to develop a better understanding of the evolution of the human lineage.

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## Introductory and Special

### Enlightenment East and West

Professor William Winstead  
HONR 2016:10 - 4 Credits  
CRN 44153  
T 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- CCAS: Philosophy major/minor course PHIL 2111

**\*This course is limited to students joining the Honor Program as rising sophomores. \***

**Course Description:** The great works of the Western and Eastern intellectual traditions take the problem of Enlightenment as their guiding theme. The concern with enlightenment emerges in the West with the origin of Occidental philosophy in Plato's famous allegory of the cave, while in the East it takes shape with the Buddha's call a century earlier to break with illusion and practice awakening. The modern enlightenment project contrasts sharply with those of antiquity thanks to its commitment to science and technology and their political and economic counterparts, liberalism and free-market capitalism. Our seminar this semester will examine enlightenment projects East and West, highlighting particularly the sharp differences between a variety of seminal responses to the problems of human wisdom, truth, suffering, and injustice. In addition to the theme of enlightenment, our discussions will be guided by fundamental questions: What is wisdom? What is a just community? What is a just or virtuous life? What is genuine knowledge? What is human nature? Is our age enlightened?



# Fall 2022 Course Descriptions

## Self & Society

### Transitional Justice

Professor Maria Restrepo  
HONR 2047:10 - 3 Credits  
CRN 43819  
R 12:45PM - 3:15PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

**Course Description:** Since the end of the Cold War, peace building interventions have increasingly implemented Transitional Justice (TJ) initiatives. TJ incorporates a dynamic set of multidisciplinary mechanisms adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuses due to conflict or authoritarian regimes. While definitions of TJ may vary, they all encompass the political, legal and moral dilemmas faced during these transitions.

The field has expanded in three significant ways: it has moved to embrace a larger number of disciplines, transcending its initial legal focus; it has broadened its goals; and it has also raised high expectations in troubled societies. Even though TJ cannot achieve all of its goals, due to its inherent limitations, this fascinating and increasingly popular field merits its careful study.

The purpose of this course is to: (i) examine and analyze TJ mechanisms including trials, truth commissions, reparations, lustration/vetting, amnesties, reforms, and memorialization; (ii) investigate normative and political debates raised by TJ processes; (iii) assess the effects and reach of TJ processes; and (iv) discuss real examples stemming from a variety of countries that have experienced huge violations of human rights.

### Food and Cities

Professor Mesbah Motamed  
HONR 2047:11 - 3 Credits  
CRN 44950  
R 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

**Course Description:** Since human societies started practicing agriculture 10,000 years ago, the relationship between food and cities has shaped the growth of economies and empires. To this day, food markets continue to drive economic debates and policy choices with consequences ranging from nutrition and cost of living to political instability and violent conflict. This class examines how agricultural systems—food production, consumption, and trade—have shaped historic and modern outcomes in health, economic development, and urbanization. Building on this foundation, it further explores how modern policies interact with food in urban settings. In this seminar, we will tackle questions like: How did agriculture give rise to cities? How does farming technology shape the food we eat? Why do some countries struggle to

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achieve food security? How do governments balance the competing demands of food producers and consumers? How does policy affect our food choices? Expert guest speakers will complement the lectures, and students will similarly contribute to topic discussions by presenting findings from the scholarly literature. In their final class paper, students will address a current policy debate in food and agriculture that draws critically from the views of researchers, advocates, and broader private interests.

**Bio:** [Dr. Motamed](#) works at the [Millennium Challenge Corporation \(MCC\)](#), an innovative and independent U.S. foreign assistance agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty. He helps develop and design high-return public investments geared towards stimulating economic growth and reducing poverty in developing countries.

## Ancient Skies: Our Journey to Understand the Cosmos

Professor Shanil Virani  
HONR 2047:12 - 3 Credits  
CRN 46809  
M 6:10PM - 8:40PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

**Course Description:** The Great Pyramids of Egypt. Newgrange in Ireland. Stonehenge in England. Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Chaco Canyon in the American southwest. Chichen Itza in Mexico. Macchu Pichu in Peru. These are just a few of the elaborate structures that our ancestors built that indicate they deciphered the pattern of the motion of the Sun over the course of the year. They understood that the Sun did not rise due East every day and did not set due west every day. They understood there was a season of cold, of warmth, of growth and renewal, and a time when nights grew long. Even the ancient Wayfinders of Polynesia figured out how to use the stars to navigate some of the most treacherous waters on Earth to discover many of the islands in the South Pacific. Join astronomer and host of the Our Island Universe podcast, Shanil Virani, as we journey through space and time to view the ancient skies of our ancestors to learn how they decoded its patterns and what that says about us as a species. Following in the path of our ancestors, semester-long observing of the day and night sky will allow you to make sense of the regular patterns they decoded.

**Bio:** [Professor Virani](#) is the host of Our Island Universe, a weekly podcast that looks at all things space. Professor Virani's research has focused on supermassive black holes at the center of galaxies.

## Leading High-Performing Teams

Professor Sharon Hill  
HONR 2047:13 - 3 Credits  
CRN 47844  
W 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

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**Course Description:** Leading and participating effectively in teams is a critical and highly valued competence in today's workforce. Many of the most pressing problems in contemporary organizations require complex solutions developed by teams that bring together diverse expertise, skills, and experiences. Yet, research points to numerous challenges that undermine successful teamwork, causing many teams to fall short of their goals. Moreover, recent teamwork trends—such as virtual teams (i.e., members distributed across different locations and time zones, relying on electronic rather than face-to-face communication) and multicultural teams—can increase these challenges. However, they can also present new opportunities. In this course, students develop knowledge and skills for leading high-performing teams, including determining when teams are (and are not) the right choice, setting teams up for success, and promoting effective team dynamics. Students will also learn research-based leadership strategies for addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities of leading teams in an increasingly digital, global age.

**Bio:** [Dr. Hill](#) is an Associate Professor of Management in the GW's School of Business. Her primary research area is virtual work, which involves work interactions using electronic rather than face-to-face communication between employees and she has previously worked with many different multinational companies. She was awarded GW's Office of the Vice Provost for Research Mentorship Award in 2022.

## Identity and Politics in Africa

Professor Matthew Kirwin  
HONR 2047:14 - 3 Credits  
CRN 47845  
M 5:10PM - 7:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

**Course Description:** The class will focus on African identities and how they both shape and are shaped by political behavior. It will commence with an examination of the origin stories of several key ethnic groups and how these narratives shape claims to legitimacy in modern polities. The class will also investigate how westerners have regarded Africa and how these largely pejorative perceptions affected western engagement with the continent and how these views continue to resonate today. It will attempt to answer the question of how identity affects political access and resource distribution on the continent. The class will conclude with a discussion of how outsiders, foreign governments and militaries as well as global extremist organizations seek to influence the continent while also considering how African publics interpret these efforts. The class will take a multimedia approach, relying on academic articles, films, novels and music to examine how African identities are formed and shaped.

**Bio:** [Dr. Kirwin](#) is a Division Chief in the Office of Opinion Research at the US Department of State who has over 20 years of work and research experience on development, and security in Africa. He once served in the Peace Corps in Niger and was awarded GW's Morton A. Bender Teaching Award in 2021.

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## Providing Reading Materials for Underprivileged Children

Professor Leo Chalupa  
HONR 2047:15 - 3 Credits  
CRN 47846  
TR 2:20PM - 3:35PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences

**Course Description:** Since the early 1950s a vast literature from the neurosciences has established the paramount importance of experience on the developing brain. The preschool years have been shown to play a determining factor in subsequent successful performance in school, and indeed, in life in general. In this context, it is alarming that children raised in disadvantaged socioeconomic families often have little or no experience with age-appropriate books. The main objective of the class is to devise a children's book drive at GWU and to distribute these books to economically disadvantaged families. The course will be comprised of the following: (i) a selective review of the relevant neuroscientific and educational literature documenting the importance of exposure to books from infancy through preschool; (ii) designing a workable plan for obtaining children's book donations from the GWU community (and possibly related groups); the sorting and storage of these books, as well as the distribution of these books utilizing appropriate channels within the District of Columbia.

A term paper based on the course experience will be required.

**Bio:** [Dr. Chalupa](#) is a Professor of Pharmacology and Physiology in GW's School of Medicine and Health Sciences whose research focuses on the developmental neurobiology of visual systems. He served for nearly a decade as GW's first Vice President for Research, growing GW's research profile significantly during his tenure.

## Holocaust Memory

Professor Walter Reich  
HONR 2047:81 - 3 Credits  
CRN 46504  
W 3:30PM - 6:00PM

Fulfills:

- 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
- This course has no GPAC designations

Course cross-listed with IAFF 3190:82 (CRN: 46577) and JSTD 2002 (CRN: 46879)

**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

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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.

## Totalitarianism: Reading Hannah Arendt

Professor Ingrid Creppell  
HONR 2047W: 81 - 3 Credits  
CRN 44704  
W 12:45PM – 3:15PM

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: 44704)\*\*\*

Course cross listed with PSC 3192W (CRN: 47958)

**Course Description:** This course will engage in a close reading of Hannah Arendt’s masterpiece *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Considered by many contemporary writers to be an essential reference today (see for a couple of examples: [Why We Should Read Hannah Arendt Now](#) and [Transcript: Ezra Kelin Interview Anne Applebaum](#)), this text requires careful exploration for its philosophical, historical, psychological, analytical and of course brilliant political insights. It has also stirred up a great deal of controversy since its publication, for its discussions of anti-semitism, race and imperialism, and communism, to name only the most explosive topics. Its magisterial achievement, passionate and engaged scholarship and enormously ambitious scope make it worth devoting an entire semester to close analysis. Hans Morgenthau (a founder of 20th century Realism in IR theory) observed: “You can fight over many things with her, but she was the first to understand fascism. Then all the professors came along years later to make details where she was the pioneer. She was a historian very close up, like Thucydides” (quoted in *Why Arendt Matters* By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl).

**Bio:** [Dr. Creppell](#) is an Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs. She is currently working on enmity as a conceptual, normative, psychological and historical phenomenon.

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## The Rise of Authoritarianism” The Role of Media, Political Economy & History

Professor Steven Livingston

HONR 2047:82 - 3 Credits

CRN 48177

TR 12:45PM - 2:00PM

Fulfills:

- This course has no GPAC designations
- SMPA: Political Communications major requirement

\*\*\*Note that UHP students will only receive Self & Society credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2047 section (CRN: 48177)\*\*\*

Course cross listed with SMPA 3194.81 (CRN: 48180)

**Course Description:** According to V-Dem, a research institute in Sweden, “In North America, and Western and Eastern Europe, no country (in 2022) has advanced in democracy in the past ten years while Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and the United States of America have declined substantially.” Nearly two-thirds (64%) of young Americans have more fear than hope about the future of democracy in America. What explains these developments, both in the U.S. and abroad? One common explanation singles out social media, often in conjunction with conventional media. Other explanations focus on social, historical, and economic factors. Interestingly, these approaches often speak past one another. One of our goals will be to join these approaches together in an effort to understanding democratic backsliding. Media effects must be understood in a social context.

**Bio:** [Dr. Livingston](#) is the Founding Director of the Institute for Data, Democracy, and Politics and Professor of Media and Public Affairs. Dr. Livingston is spending the Spring 2023 semester as senior fellow at the Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS) research consortium in Berlin, Germany and completed a Fulbright Scholar in Helsinki in 2021.

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## Arts & Humanities

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A History

Professor Christopher Brick  
HONR 2053:10 - 3 Credits  
CRN 44658  
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."

**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](#).

### The History of Coups d'état in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Examination of the Nature of Political Power and Violence

Professor Seth Rotramel  
HONR 2053:13 - 3 Credits  
CRN 44659  
W 3:30PM -6:00PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

**Course Description:** This course examines the timing and causes of the seizure of executive power by the use or threat of force by some segment of a state's ruling class or state apparatus. By looking at both long and short-term causes of coups, we will seek to better understand the nature of political power through the lens of political violence. After defining what a coup is and investigating theoretical underpinnings, the course will take a deep dive into a number of case studies that occurred during the twentieth century. Not confining ourselves to any one country or region, these case studies provide a comparative approach that will augment our theoretical understanding with real world examples. Investigating the dramatic events leading up to and following a coup d'état will also serve as a vehicle to examine

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broader issues affecting humanity. Thus, by examining illegal seizures of governments, we will also be studying the political consequences of poverty, inequality, modernization, political fractionalization, and coercive production structures.

**Bio:** Dr. Rotramel has served as a historian for the State Department since 2011 and focuses on the history of American diplomacy. He recently compiled and edited a [Foreign Relations of the United States document](#) focused on the Carter administration's approach to the South Asia region in response to the shifting political landscape at the end of the 1970s.

## Hindu, Buddhist & Daoist Religio-Philosophical Traditions in Comparative Perspective

Professor B.N. Hebbar  
HONR 2053:14 - 3 Credits  
CRN 44660  
W 6:10PM - 8:40PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

**Course Description:** This course will look into early Hinduism (prior to the advent of Buddhism) and then, after briefly studying Jainism, move onto study Buddhism (history, philosophy & religion) in all of eastern Asia. The course will then look into the seven schools of Classical Hinduism and then study the tradition of Daoism in terms of its philosophy and religion. The course will also look into the conflict and cooperation aspects of Buddhism with both Hinduism (in India) and Daoism (in China).

**Bio:** [Dr. Hebbar](#) teaches Religions of the East and currently serves as Executive Vice-President of the International Buddhist Association of America. He was awarded GW's Morton A. Bender Teaching Award in 2006.

## Major Authors: Jane Austen

Professor Maria Frawley  
HONR 2053W:81 - 3 Credits  
CRN 46505  
TR 11:10AM – 12:25PM

Fulfills:

- GPAC Critical Thinking in the Humanities

\*\*\*Note that UHP students will only receive Arts & Humanities credit if they are enrolled in the HONR 2053 section (CRN: 46505)\*\*\*

Course cross listed with ENGL 3820W.10 (CRN: 47654)

**Course Description:** Jane Austen: Literary Icon



# Fall 2023 Course Descriptions



Why does Jane Austen still matter? This course focuses on the novelist's literary achievements, the vagaries of her reception over time, and on her continuing relevance to our own culture and historical moment. Our reading will include all of her novels, some unpublished early writing, and work unfinished at her death. Understanding the social and historical contexts that shaped Austen's work will be a major preoccupation. Among our many topics for consideration will be the ways Austen both reflects and responds to social hierarchy and class relations in Regency England; the relationship between gender ideology, "conduct book culture," and Austen's representations of women's lives; Austen and the histories and legacies of colonialism and slavery; Austen's views of national identity in the era of the French Revolution; and her innovative narrative and linguistic techniques. Also, Austen and adaptation (esp. film, but also other media)! Students will expect to come away from this course with a solid grasp of the social, historical, and literary contexts of Austen's fiction; with greater appreciation of the stylistic achievements of her fiction writing; and with the ability to critically assess how and why Austen's works have been received and adapted over time. Writing assignments for this course will enable students to cultivate their analytic abilities and tap into their creativity, while also practicing writing for different audiences.

**Bio:** [Dr. Frawley](#) is Professor of English and chair of the Department of English whose research interests focus on nineteenth-century British literature, social history, and print culture. She served as Executive Director of the UHP for many years and was awarded GW's Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Faculty Prize in Teaching in 2022.

# Fall 2023 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.

# Fall 2023 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.

### Meditation at Amata Meditation Center

Professor Eyal Aviv  
HONR 4199:11 - 1 Credit  
CRN 45609  
R 1:00PM - 2:50PM

**This course will meet on October 20<sup>th</sup> (10AM – 12PM) and 28<sup>th</sup> (9AM – 5PM).**

**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 daylong meditation experience will be on a Saturday, October 28th. 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 October (if you would like to participate in this capstone but the fee represents a financial hardship, please speak with Prof. Aviv).**

### Games

Professor Bethany Cobb Kung  
HONR 4199:12 - 1 Credit  
CRN 43545  
F 1:30PM – 3:30PM

**This course will meet on September 8, 15, 22, & 29.**

**Course Description:** Archaeological evidence demonstrates that humans have been playing board games and using dice for over 5,000 years. Today, card and tabletop gaming represents a \$10 billion industry which is expected to continue growing in the coming years. Clearly - humans love to play games! Together in this capstone, we will consider the history of gaming and its purpose in culture and society. We will ponder why we love to play games and what lessons we can learn from these games. We will also play games! Course readings will include excerpts from books such as "It's All a Game: The History of Board Games from Monopoly to Settlers of Catan" by Tristan Donovan and "Your Move: What

# Fall 2023 Course Descriptions

Board Games Teach Us About Life" by Joan Moriarity and Jonathan Kay. Each meeting will start with a discussion in which we will draw connections between board games and life and then we will challenge each other to the "game of the day" (including classics such as backgammon and modern tabletop games, too). For our final meeting, we will try our hand at an escape room! Please note that this capstone requires a \$15 fee, payable to the Honors Program main office in September.

## Nature Appreciation

Professor Thiago Moreira  
HONR 4199:13 - 1 Credit  
CRN 44657  
F 10:00AM - 1:00PM

**This course will meet on September 8, 15, 22 & 29.**

**Course Description:** "Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair."  
—Khalil Gibran

To live in a modern city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not easy. We are always busy with our schedules. Things to do, places to be... We are surrounded by all comforts and amenities a modern city has to offer. So much that we can be entirely consumed by modern technology and forget that there is a whole world out there.... In this course, I propose we step out of our busy modern urban life and stop to smell the flowers (literally, if you so wish...). We will visit some places where we can experience and experience some of the beauties nature has to offer to us. We will use our time to visit some places that hold some of the biodiversity of life, but also try to appreciate nature in our daily urban surroundings. This course has a great deal of moving around the city, so we have a more extended time band to cover the trip time.