



Spring 2024 Humanities Colloquia

Religion East and West: The Big Questions (and Answers in Words and Art)

Paula Levin, TTH 12:15 pm – 1:30 pm

HONOR 350 – 001

We will examine the teachings of Eastern and Western Religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam - in their attempts to guide us to answers to The Big Questions: What is the meaning of life, how should I live, what happens after life, what is God. We will experience the great world of artistic expression of religious ideas through literature, virtual tours, visual media, and music. Guest lecturers will enhance our understanding of religion as it is practiced today. The emphasis of the course is on class discussion of what we experience and react to.

Are We Our Brains?

Nathaniel Blower, MWF 10:45 am – 11:35 am

HONOR 350 - 002

In this class we will discuss a number of topics related to the question: Are we our brains? The central focus of the course will be a dispute between Peter Hacker and Daniel Dennett. Hacker argues against the habit in neuroscience of treating brains as though they were people: assuming that brains think, feel, perceive, intend and do all manner of things that ordinarily we say people do, not their brains. Daniel Dennett defends the neuroscientists, claiming that Hacker pays too much attention to what we ordinarily say. As we discuss this dispute, we will touch on a number of traditionally philosophical questions about free-will, the afterlife, morality, subjectivity and more. On the more scientific side, we will discuss topics in neuroscience, computer science, mathematics, linguistics and more.

Humanitarian Social Media - Yes or No?

Carrie Tomko, MWF 9:40 am – 10:30 am

HONOR 350 – 003

Social media brings instantaneous news, information, and entertainment. Is it accurate in detail? Is it even true? Is it responsible "journalism"? Does it benefit humanity? Does it require accountability? This colloquium looks at the good, bad, and even the "ugly" of social media, studying the impact on culture.

Hunting Witches in Early Modern Europe

Michael Graham, MW 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

HONOR 350 – 004

This workshop-style colloquium will focus on one of the stranger aspects of early modern European history: the fact that the same era that included the scientific revolution and the early enlightenment also witnessed the execution of tens of thousands of people (mostly women) for the imaginary crime of witchcraft. We will start with a general survey of the witch hunt. Following that, teams of students will delve into sets of trial dossiers in an effort to figure out what was really going on in those particular cases. Finally, students will be able to get creative, either by writing and performing one-act plays on their particular cases, or else "forging" a pamphlet about their case, in the style of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tabloid-style accounts of witchcraft. This course should be of particular interest to students interested in history, literature, religion, anthropology, communications, psychology or sociology.



Salsa: History in Motion

Martha Santos, TTH 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

HONOR 350 – 005

This interdisciplinary colloquium provides the opportunity to examine and experience the history, aesthetics, and movement of salsa dancing, from its origins in the Afro-Cuban rhythms and dances of enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples to its modern emergence in the Latin neighborhoods of New York during the 1970s. Through reading, discussion, and debate, we will analyze how the various rhythms and dances encompassed in salsa emerged within complex histories of globalization, colonialism, enslavement, immigration, and cultural commodification in the Caribbean and New York. Through movement, we will explore the embodied strategies through which various peoples navigated their historical circumstances and the meanings they assigned to their music and dance. As an experience in interdisciplinarity, this course invites us to imagine and participate in new ways of learning, teaching, and communicating history. Assessment will not be based on dancing ability. Instead, the course will develop its own creative language to reflect on our discovery of the history and motion of salsa.

Adapting the Mystery: The Mystery of Adaptation

Matthew Wyszynski, TTH 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

HONOR 350 - 006

The classical mystery story/novel is a genre known for its strict conventions and the obligation of the author to “play fair” with the reader. This colloquium will examine some of the works of a few canonical mystery writers (Doyle, Christie, Stout), analyze how these authors establish, reinforce, and expand the limits of the genre. We will also move on to adaptations of these well-known works—as TV shows, films, podcasts, and even board games—to study how one genre and medium is adapted to other forms. There will be class discussion, several response papers, and a final project.

Theatre through the Ages

Dane Leasure, MW 3:30 – 4:45 pm

HONOR 350 – 007

"It's Greek to me!" In this course we begin in Antiquity studying Greek theatre and dramatic literature, to Medieval times, to the Renaissance and Shakespeare. This course will incorporate putting plays on their feet and culminate in the creation of a little theatre festival of 1–5-minute adaptations of the plays we read throughout the semester. This festival will be held at the end of the semester and will be open to the public!

Enchanted Tales: Analyzing the Stories That Make Us

Juuliana Amir, Online Asynchronous

HONOR 350 - 501

Stories of the dark woods, the forbidden fruit, filial love, and creative intelligence grace the pages of many beloved storybooks. This colloquium explores the construction, shaping, and use of folklore, fairytales, and myths as the pillars of our own culture. How does the language of fairytales and myths intersect with the language of our dreams, both literal and figurative? Is there a certain age where folklore loses its meaning to us? How much do these enchanted stories shape our identity? We will investigate the archetypes these stories create, how they relate in terms of our own personalities, and how they are utilized to sold modern messages. The course allows students to analyze these stories for their cultural resonance, and gives them the option of creating stories of their own.