The Art of War

Taught by: Scott Henderson

“You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.” -- Leon Trotsky. What is war? Is peace the normal state of affairs, interrupted only periodically by war... or is it the other way around? What have been the main causes of war over the centuries? Is there a Western way of war, and what do its practitioners expect? Why have Western armies seemed to dominate the battlefield for the last five centuries? Is there such a thing as a “just war”? Finally, what will be the causes of wars in the future, and can they be prevented, or are they as inevitable as earthquakes or devastating storms? These are just a few of the questions we will pursue as we study war holistically, as well as in its various deadly guises. War is the enemy of all, and only by carefully studying one’s enemy, says the ancient Chinese strategist Sun-Tzu, can we hope to defeat it. To do so, we will examine Sun-Tzu’s Art of War in great detail, as well as the experiences and viewpoints of both ancient and modern makers (and victims) of war. Does Sun-Tzu’s two thousand year-old text have relevance for us living today in the 21st Century? If you are interested in history, literature, politics, ethics, or strategy, this is the course for you!

Bae-ography: Story of a Life

Taught by: Chris Holmes

Scholars will learn basic elements of memoir and biography writing, beginning with how to find a person’s “story” and culminating with the publishing of an actual biography (well, a mini one). Delve into who you are – and why you are – through narrative non-fiction, and take your observation skills to an entirely new level as you learn so much about fellow scholars that you could write a book about them. Then we’ll write a book about them, weaving together in-depth interviews, analyses and images to publish skillfully crafted portraits of each other that are surprising, enlightening and endearing. Expect to produce your best writing, painting pictures so vivid, so poignant that they create intimate and eternal connections with your readers.

Coding: Turning Ideas Into (Virtual) Reality

Taught by: Joel Jeffries

The world runs on computers. That makes having the ability to program a kind of superpower. The process of creating something out of nothing is fun and fulfilling, and it gives us the ability to turn our ideas into something that can be shared. In this major we will build from the basics some of these abilities by challenging ourselves to create through code. Whether it be a small arcade game or a digital pet to keep us company, we will work and problem solve to make a dream reality. We will learn to think like software developers in teams. By the end of our time, all should be able to walk away with skills that everyone should have in modern times. All should walk away a superhero.
Cosmologists, Psychologists, Historians, Artists: Science Fiction Authors and How They Understand the World

Taught by: Ben Batzer

Science fiction writers have plumbed psychology, sociology, history, and biology to explore the possibilities and limits of human knowledge. Even though they often look to the future, science fiction writers have just as much to say about the past and present. Not only does their fiction ask us to confront questions about the world we live in today, but it also—and perhaps more importantly—interrogates what kind of creatures we are: What are we capable of? How do we produce, guard, and employ power? How do we respond to social and ecological change? Are we stewards, masters, or subjects of the universe? This class will explore all of these complicated topics, and many more, by reading some terrific science fiction. We will read a variety of short fiction and watch several films that stretch the imagination, blur the realistic and fantastic, and problematize what we believe to be true. This course will entice anyone interested in psychology, history, creative writing, or technology, though it will be equally alluring to avid readers of any kind of literature. Readings, films, discussions, writing workshops, and occasional research projects will account for diverse interests and backgrounds.

Finding Hogwarts

Taught by: Jennifer Fisher

Famous Missourian Mark Twain once said, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." But who decides what the difference is between the two? In this course, we will discover, discuss, and dissect the American education system from its very foundations and challenge what it means to be "educated." We will ask questions like the following: "Whose job is it to make sure American kids are learning?"; "Should teachers be armed in a world where school shootings are becoming commonplace?"; "Is it a school's job to teach students to have good character?"; and "What place should sports have in education?" Together in this course, we will work to try to create a school of our own that could rival the likes of Hogwarts! We will question the place of politics in education and analyze the position that schools hold in sparking social change. We will try to figure out gifted students' place in all of this and consider how it affects your education. After all, if knowledge is power, then those who hold the keys to unlock it are some very powerful people indeed!

Finding Your Voice: Explorations in Writing

Taught by: Jordan Henson

"For last year's words belong to last year's language / And next year's words await another voice." These lines, famously penned by T.S. Eliot, speak to our ever-shifting understanding of literature. T. S. Eliot, William Shakespeare, Toni Morrison, Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, E. E. Cummings, J. K. Rowling, and countless other writers have expressed their voice through the written word. In doing so, they have created literature that is equal parts timeless, enchanting, and transformative. No author is born with the skill to publish. Through diligent practice and dozens of worn out pens and keyboards, they honed their craft and refined their voice to become the legends we know them as.
If You're Not Part of the Solution, You're Part of the Precipitate

Taught by: Stephanie Harman

This course will take scholars on a journey from atoms to acid, from enthalpy to electrolysis, from ions to indicators, and from the nature of gases to the gases in nature. Each topic will evolve rapidly from fundamental to theoretical, and this course will appeal most to students who have experience with chemistry, but everyone is welcome. Scholars enrolled in this course should be prepared to experience chemistry through challenging, exciting, and fun lab activities that are not typically a part of the normal high school curriculum.

Introduction to Philosophy: Great Thoughts Worth Thinking

Taught by: Nick Kirschman

Utilizing sections of The Republic, the class will explore questions of ethics, epistemology, religion, government and economics and finally aesthetics. Learn why Socrates claimed that knowledge of the self is paramount, why Plato distrusted democracy and why Aristotle believed that excellence is a habit, like riding a bike. Different schools of philosophy and philosophers will be discussed in dialogue with Plato’s ideas and see why it is important to question everything.

It’s the End of the World (As We Know It): An Exploration of -ISMS

Taught by: Brian Stuhlman

It’s not easy being green, and it’s definitely not easy living in a world of varied tastes, mixed opinions, and random ideas. Using the arts and philosophies of the last century or so, we will research the past and use it to find out where we are today, artistically and philosophically speaking. With explorations ranging from cubism to impressionism to theatre of the absurd, to modern and contemporary arts, and MUCH more, we will try to work with and understand the philosophies underlying cultural change, and we’ll create some groovy art . . . all in the trek to figure out where we are, why we are, and where we are going. No arts experience required! You need only to possess a creative spirit and an open mind to enjoy, to learn from and to emulate the written, visual and performance arts that include all sorts... Picasso to Calvin and Hobbes, Steve Martin to the Muppets, Albert Einstein to Pablo Picasso, expressionism to memes, jazz to rap, Godot to Seuss, communism to symbolism, collage to splatter art...the list of literature and artists and philosophies goes on and on!
Japanese Language, Customs, Culture, and International Relations

Taught by: Ake Takahashi

You will learn basic Japanese: Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana, some vocabulary using flash cards and pantomime.

Journey of the Hero

Taught by: Adam Campbell

What do Harry Potter, Hercules, and the Holy Grail have in common? Why do cultures which have never had contact tell remarkably similar myths? Why does everyone love a good story? In this class, we dive deep into Joseph Campbell’s "Hero’s Journey,” a form of story so powerful and universal he called it the “monomyth,” and explore the wisdom that myths of old and movies of today impart for the art of living. Be forewarned: accepting the call to adventure requires entering the unknown; this class is for the seekers and risk takers!

Lightning Bugs, Or Lightning?

Taught by: Tina Casagrand

This class dunks you straight into the outdoor world with challenges both physical and mental. Regular field trips to the buggy, humid climes of Mid-Missouri are paired with in-class drills in bird identification, native plants, and Missouri ecology. Be prepared also to read about and discuss big ideas around nature-culture interactions in America and the Midwest from authors such as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Terry Tempest Williams, Meera Subramanian, and more. It’s going to get wild.

To Infinity and Beyond

Taught by: Frank Corley

We'll start at zero, and we won't stop until we get there. The concept of infinity pervades so much of mathematics that we will have plenty to do in this course. What happens when a process is repeated over and over again, changing only a single parameter each time? Does infinity come in different levels, or is it one size fits all? Is infinity a number or is it something else? How can we prove a statement about all the numbers without proving it individually for every number? Can infinity be arrived at or can we even get close to it? Will these questions never end? Take the course and find out.
Understanding the Modern Middle East

Taught by: Shadi Peterman

Conflict and crisis in the Middle East have been regular events on the nightly news in recent decades. This course will consider the origins and continuing aspects of major events in several areas of the Middle East, including the rise of ISIS, the Syrian Civil War and refugee crisis, and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Students will consider many factors that contribute to the conflicts, including political, economic, and religious issues. Students will also be challenged to propose ways to address each situation, considering what role the United States and/or international organizations and coalitions can and should play.

"Whaaaaaaat, That's Not Music!"

Taught by: Austin McWilliams

Or is it? This major, whose name was inspired by a skeptical 2017 MSA resident assistant, aims to explore just what music is. We'll start at the physical origins of sound to determine what's interesting about noise with a discernable pitch, and we'll mathematically derive the musical system most frequently used in Western society today. From there we'll jump into a cursory overview of music theory and history—that is, until we hit the year 1900 and musical chaos erupts. At this point in the course, scholars themselves will become the musicians as we dare to perform and analyze some of the great experimental works of the Modern era. The course will culminate with scholars each creating and performing their own twenty-first century composition using digital audio editing software, found sounds, traditional instruments, and whatever else we've come to know as music.

Where There's a Will There's a Way: Shakespeare Today

Taught by: Mike Kersulov

What’s the big deal with Shakespeare? The language can be confusing. He’s been dead for years. But for some reason he is still important in today’s world. This course will look at how Shakespeare still impacts our lives and entertainment through film, television, and even comic books. Have you read all the different types of Shakespearean plays? Do you like romance, murder, mystery, shipwrecks, and fantasy? They are all there calling out to us. Romeo, Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, Iago, and Bottom. We will meet them all, act the parts, and find how they work themselves into our lives. But we won’t stop there. While we lose ourselves in the magic of drama and theater, we will find a way to become more acquainted with Shakespeare and his works and determine how each and every one of us has a little bit of Shakespeare inside.
With Friends like These, Who Needs Hegemonies? 
Employing the Sociological Imagination 

Taught by: Doug Valentine

What makes you who you are? Are we just a collection of free-floating individuals? Do our histories and experiences matter? What’s all this “privilege” business about? Using a sociological perspective, we will examine the categories of race, gender, class, and much more. We will discuss important local, national, and global news while exploring topics such as inequality, social construction, universal human rights, and cultural relativism. We will investigate how the social institutions of education, the family, government, religion, and media contribute to our socialization, police "deviant" behavior, and engage in social control. It’s a big world with diverse perspectives. Let’s explore a few. When we use the sociological imagination, things get real.

You Can't Do That: Laws, Rights, Prohibitions, and Consequences

Taught by: John Meyer

What are we empowered to do, and what are we prohibited from doing? We understand that we enjoy a freedom of speech, but what am I allowed to say? Where am I allowed to say it? What is speech? Why can my school principal limit what I say in school, or dictate what I wear? Can my boss fire me for something I say? This course looks for those answers. You Can’t Do That is an examination of sources and limits of laws, power, why we are allowed to do what we do, and the results of doing what we can’t. This course will examine power, rights, prohibitions, and consequences of human actions, focusing one issue at a time on the legal issues that most affect teenagers.