...And Then You're Dead

Taught by: Jennifer Meyer

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you REALLY got swallowed by a whale, jumped into a black hole, were hit by a meteorite, or were in an elevator and the cable broke? What would it feel like to stand on the surface of the sun or jump in a hole that went all the way to China? What would it be like to be buried alive or hit by a penny dropped from the tallest building on Earth? Have you been asking questions like these your whole life? Are you tired of getting lame answers like, “you would probably die?” Then this is the class for you! We will use REAL SCIENCE to predict and explain what would happen if you were in these and many other deadly situations.

Animated Explorations of Children's Media

Taught by: Brian Stuhlman

Many children, and those who are children at heart, are still delighted by puppets, cartoons, and costume-clad personalities in our media, but too seldom do we lend these expressions much critical thought. Scholars in 'Animated Explorations of Children's Media' will watch, analyze and criticize a number of entertainments meant for “children,” from Sesame Street and Looney Tunes to Disney and Mister Rogers, and much more, and discuss what they mean and how they mean it, how they are structured, what social issues are addressed by their nature and content, what their goals are, and whether or not they accomplish their goals. We will follow similar paths as we analyze some entertainments that ‘appear’ to be for children, but may not be (e.g. The Muppets, South Park, Family Guy, etc.) because of language, violence, and other questionable content. We will further study a variety of presentation techniques, such as puppetry, animation, claymation, stop-motion and acting, and we will work to put together a demonstration that will effectively educate and entertain . . . . It'll be child’s play!

The Blues, Jazz and the American Experience: Thriving on a Riff

Taught by: Jordan Henson

"Jazz is not just music, it's a way of life, it's a way of being, a way of thinking." - Nina Simone. The blues and jazz were the first musical forms to emerge exclusively on American soil. Their emergence from the unique cultural blending of late 19th and early 20th century New Orleans mirrors the great “melting pot” of America, and their history is implicitly tied to the history of its country. The blues and jazz quickly jumped out of the musical staff and into literature, art, and even philosophy. Students in this minor will study and listen to the blues and jazz, tracing their history and influences among other artistic disciplines, discussing how they differ from other musical forms, and investigating how jazz performance and improvisation can help one navigate the notes, high, low, blue, and everywhere in between, of life’s grand melody. No prior musical experience required!
Gutters, Tights, and Talking Mice

Taught by: Mike Kersulov

Superheroes, zombies, and talking mice. The face of literature has changed, and we are finding new ways to write and express stories: comic books! This course will explore storytelling with comic books and graphic novels and how they have influenced other forms. We will look at superhero movies, the culture of comic book conventions, and how comics have impacted our culture as a whole. We will get a bit artsy and cover the foundations of "sequential art" - what makes comics work - and read some of the most highly praised works in the field. We will look at a variety of comics, including superheroes, manga, webtoons, zines, pic-to-essays, travel diaries, and memoirs. We will also write comics, apply new theories, talk to comic book artists, have the time-honored comic book shop experience, and by the end of the academy you might even find yourself dressed as a superhero.

Introduction to Philosophy: Great Thoughts Worth Thinking

Taught by: Nick Kirschman

An abridged version of the major with the same title, this minor will introduce scholars to why it is important to question everything. What are great thoughts? Why are they worth thinking? Should you think about them? What are metaphysics, epistemology, and aesthetics? Philosophy attempts to answer these questions — mainly by providing more questions. Come and question everything you have ever been told. Discussions, seminars, meditations, plays, and journals will be used to reflect on questions we, as human beings, face. We will also attempt to apply these grand thoughts to everyday problems through ethics.

The Lighter Side of Latin

Taught by: Scott Henderson

Veni! Vidi! Risi! (I came! I saw! I laughed!) In this minor course we will go beyond the ever-so serious facade of ancient Rome, with its Caesars, soldiers, and statues, to get an idea of what life was like for the average ancient Roman, with whom you and I have more in common than you could have ever realized. Ancient Roman comedy, cuisine, and carousing will be just a few of the subjects we examine as learn the basics of the language of the ancient Romans -- Latin. Though considered a “dead” language by many, you'll be pleased to known that Latin is alive and well today; one just has to know where to look for it. What’s more, a familiarity with Latin and Roman culture can prove to be a valuable tool in many modern fields of study. From gladiators to graffiti. From forums to fashions. There's something for everyone in this exploration of the lighter side of Latin and the ancient Romans!
Madness in the Media

Taught by: Marjorie Perkins

Madness in the Media: Mindful Musings on Manifestations of Mental Health
Curious about the way reality and the arts intersect? Wondering about the impact of books and shows from Jane Eyre to 13 Reasons Why and more? Want to learn more about mental health? Join us as we explore the intricacies of depictions of mental health throughout history in literature, movies, news media, and other forms of mass communication. Bring your questions, curiosity, open minds, and critical thinking as we reflect on the power and lasting implications of these portrayals!

Mathematical Mazes for the Mind

Taught by: Ake Takahashi

We will work on very challenging math problems. We will also work on problems through rebuses, math puzzles, Tribond, and Mensa topics to enhance your problem solving skills. You are also introduced to many interesting mathematical topics that are not found in school textbooks.

Math Imitates Art

Taught by: Frank Corley

Or does art imitate math? We see in an area such as architecture that there is important interplay between these two seemingly separate disciplines. But are there really "two cultures"? Or can poetry, music and visual art speak to mathematics? Can the fine arts be approached in a mathematical way? Bring both your left brain and your right brain to class every day, because you never know which you'll need, probably both!

Print Isn't Dead!

Taught by: Tina Casagrand

Does print media have a future in the digital age? We say yes--but it's complicated. This class explores nuances of news, art, curation, expression and community-building through discussion and production. We'll even make some hand-made publications of our own, both as independent projects and in groups.
Recreational Mathematics

Taught by: Joel Jeffries

Mathematics is often done to answer some of the hardest questions our society faces. It is a powerful multifaceted tool that helps push us forward. Mathematics is useful. But that is not what this class is about. Instead, we will be looking at some of the mathematics people have done throughout the ages just because they can. We will explore ideas from fractals to combinatorial games to pretty much anything Martin Gardner liked. We will play with ideas not because they are useful, but because there is joy to be had in the act of thinking. And, along the way, though we may try to avoid it, we may discover some of the amazing usefulness of mathematics anyway.

Social Justice for Muggles

Taught by: Jennifer Fisher

"I'd say that it's one short step from 'Wizards first' to 'Purebloods first,' then to 'Death Eaters'...We're all human, aren't we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving." - Kingsley Shacklebolt

Have you heard this quote before? Do you know what it means? Do you proudly wear your S.P.E.W. membership badge? Have you often felt that the Centaur Liaison Office is insulting and unnecessary? Do you worry about the state of anti-werewolf legislation? Have you spent hours drawing parallels between social justice issues in both the Muggle and Magical worlds? If you can answer yes to ALL of these questions, this is the minor for you!

The Spoken Word: Performance Poetry

Taught by: Chris Holmes

Spoken word poetry combines the skill of using words to create images with the art of delivering these words to stir emotions. Poets – both novice and veteran – will study how to mix writing and performance by analyzing professional spoken word poetry, practicing the creative process with a hyper-focus on word choice, and delivering performances that literally mess with people’s emotions (in the best way) with mind-blowing metaphors and messages, word plays and rhythms. An MSA Slam also adds a layer of healthy competition. This is your opportunity and venue to take words, passions and big ideas, mix a hefty amount of originality with a dash of spice, and serve a rich fare of panache and emotion.

TED

Taught by: Adam Campbell

You've got 20 minutes to change the world through the expression of your One Great Idea. Can you do it? Many have tried, documented in the now famous TED Talk series. In this class, we look at the
best (and worst?) TED Talks, both to explore the art of oral argumentation, and to debate the hottest issues and ideas of our times. Be ready to have your world rocked!

They Did What?!
Taught by: Stephanie Harman

Science, especially chemistry, is filled with fascinating tales of intrigue, adventure, betrayal, and even love. This course will allow scholars to journey through the history of some of chemistry’s most notable and notorious characters and their influence on the world as we know it today. If you have ever heard any of the legends of scientists gone-by (and even if you haven’t), this course will answer the question: “They did what?”

This Minor is Socially Constructed: On Social Categories and their Consequences
Taught by: Doug Valentine

Why do boys like blue and girls like pink? Who determines what counts as low, middle, or upper class? Does race exist? What are the material and social consequences of arbitrary divisions among people? Is science objective? If you have ever wondered about any of these issues, look no further! This minor will critically examine the taken-for-granted categories that make up our world from a sociological perspective. Hannah Arendt once said “there are no dangerous thoughts; thinking itself is a dangerous activity.” Warning: danger ahead.

What Does It Mean to Be Human?
Taught by: Shadi Peterman

Are humans the only species to use complex language? Are we the only ones capable of altruism or empathy? This course explores the question of what it means to be human through an anthropological and sociological lens. The course will begin by looking at the question from the perspective of biological/physical anthropology by studying both ancient human ancestors and our modern primate relatives, looking at both their physiology and behavior to understand what is (and is not) unique to humans. We will then shift to a cultural anthropological/sociological perspective to think about what aspects of human societies seem to be universal and consider why certain types of institutions and social structures are so common among humans.
Who Says What Gets Read? Censorship in American Poetry

Taught by: Ben Batzer

According to the American Library Association, 323 books were challenged in 2016 in attempts to restrict or remove these books from public spaces. These challenges point to a larger, national wariness about what literature has to say about such topics as religion, sexuality, politics, or authority. Censorship, or attempted censorship, problematizes the ideals of free expression and open access to information. At the same time, censorship gives more attention and notoriety to the very texts that would be suppressed, which calls into question the whole project of censorship. This class will explore the censorship and surveillance of literature by focusing on poets whose work has been challenged. We will read a variety of controversial poetry, interrogating censorship and anti-censorship efforts. In doing so, we will confront thorny questions about free speech and public ethics.

This course will interest scholars who want to learn more about literature, power, or ethics. While the backbone of the course is a study of poetry, we will be just as much concerned with better understanding the cultural backdrops of the twentieth century. Readings, discussions, writing workshops, and occasional research projects will account for diverse interests and backgrounds.