

CAPSTONE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

June 2017

Africans in the Diaspora

This course will explore the activities and experiences of African people who live outside the African continent from the earliest times to the present. This course examines the migration of Africans to Europe, Asia, and the Americas, and gives special attention to the slave trade across the Sahara Desert and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans; the comparative experience of Africans in slavery in the Middle East and the Americas; emancipation and the process of racial and national integration; and the economic, political, and cultural contributions of Africans in the Diaspora, especially as it relates to elements of African culture such as religion, music, art, literature, language, and folklore.

Berkshire Art, Industry, and Tourism

Considers the historical, social, & economic impact of agriculture, industry, culture, & tourism on Berkshire County. Offers an integrative perspective on industrial development, the role of the arts, and the impact of tourism on Berkshire County throughout the 19th, 20th, and now 21st century. Examines these concepts in the context of the microcosm of Berkshire County.

Community Engagement in the Arts

Explores intersections between creative process, social activism and collaborative work in community contexts. Students will consider how artists and arts managers work to catalyze communities through engagement in the arts. Students will investigate examples of communities and organizations that have successfully used the arts as strategies to address issues by sparking successful community dialogue and artistic explorations. These examples will provide diverse models for how the arts can serve broader social goals. Students will conduct field research investigating community-based organizations committed to community engagement through site visits and interaction with organizational leaders. Issues of context, diversity, inclusion and access will be explored.

Conversations on Race in American Society

Explores evolving conceptions of "race" in the United States, beginning in the antebellum period and extending into the present day. Draws upon a variety of disciplines including literature, history, law, sociology, and anthropology. Explores the dynamic power relationships that are engendered and sustained by American legal and cultural practices. Will chart the conversations about "race" as they emerge in literature, law, and society. "Race" is not a stable identity categorization, but an ideological framework through which power and domination, liberation and self-determination have been articulated and enacted throughout American history. This course will incorporate perspectives from a variety of writers, theorists, and community members. Special emphasis will be given to changing conceptions of "race."

Ecotourism

Offers students the opportunity to learn about the top ecotourism regions in the world and learn the basics of successful ecotourism facilities. Students will integrate knowledge from several disciplines, applying academic learning and critical thinking skills to modern day issues, encouraging them to become engaged citizens. Topics covered will include: emerging markets, ecotourism environments, ecological impact, economic and sociocultural impact, ecotourism as a business, external environments, ecotourism and world survey.

Entrepreneurship and Culture

An American business and its founder will be studied as a reflection of the social, political, economic, philosophic, artistic, scientific, and technological theories and conditions at the time of the firm's establishment. The course emphasizes instruction and exercise in multidisciplinary research, writing, and the connectedness of interdisciplinary knowledge.

Environmental Communications

This class begins with an important case study: the causes and effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on New Orleans. We will then be focusing on four elements of Environmental Communication. The first is the concept which in cognitive science is called "conceptual framework theory." This theory studies the underlying assumptions and habits of thought that shape the environmental outlook of people with whom we hope to communicate. It is only by shifting these conceptual frameworks that our interlocutors can begin to listen to news about the environment. A second method of analyzing environmental information is social choice theory (a blend of sociology and economics that studies values). Third, we will be studying systems theory (which will enable students to make visual charts of the complex interrelations of money, people, and the environment). Last, we will be studying the leadership techniques used by Ernest Shackleton on his voyage to the Antarctic on the ship Endeavor. Students will next look at the larger picture of how the earth is doing, and then they will apply these theories to an environmental problem of their choosing, examining the quality of the answer these techniques facilitate, and then students will design an effective way to communicate the best solution to the problem they have chosen to study as a service to the larger community of which they are a part. Students may follow up on these projects as independent studies, which we envision being administered by an advisory board from the college and community, as well as a sponsoring instructor.

Feminism and Theatre

Presents a detailed study of theatrical works written by women within the context of feminist theory. The class examines how feminism has shaped theatre and investigates connections to the past and present. Focusing on plays written in the 20th century our explorations will lead to key issues such as the lost female theatrical tradition, problems of representation, the complex definitions of various types of feminisms, challenges posed by organized queer feminists and feminists of color, and making theatre in a "post-feminist moment."

Film as Philosophy

Examines a range of landmark films that pose fundamental questions about being, knowing, and self-understanding. The working presupposition for this course is that film is art, but like every serious work of art, it projects visions of humanity, of knowledge and the world of shared social behavior. The goal is to build on issues dramatized in these films to reflect further on various dimensions of a liberal arts education that each student has undertaken over the past few years.

Food, Nutrition, and Culture

This course will integrate knowledge from several disciplines as an introduction into the emerging field of the sociology of food. We will critically analyze modern-day issues related to food. We will also work in groups as we examine the cultural meanings of food, its production, distribution, preparation, and consumption. Topics will include food and its relationship to historical and cultural factors, the thin ideal and the health-related risks of anorexia and bulimia, food and social class, food choices, the fast food industry, and food chain philosophies.

From DNA to Homo sapiens

Students will demonstrate the basics of genetics, and how DNA is structured and provides the recipe for life as the predominant informational molecule. The basic principle of evolutionary theory will be analyzed and how after some 3.5 billion years we have gone from organic molecules to humans. We will apply the role of genes (DNA) to the modern world and its impact on societies and the future of humans. We'll explain its impact on evolutionary psychology and the behaviors of modern humans and how they came about through the evolutionary process. Genetics and evolutionary theory extends far beyond the area of "biology" and impacts history and the social sciences in the modern world. We will analyze, how is it that the "book", known as the Human genome, is in reality, the book that wrote itself. The pieces of the puzzle will be demonstrated and applied to their own lives as citizens of a democratic republic.

Light, Sight, and Insight

What, exactly, is light? How does the mind's eye make sense out of what you see? What is insight and how is it connected to light and sight? Like experts who study these phenomena, we may come away with more intriguing questions than answers. In the process, we will observe and describe different qualities of light in nature, grapple with visual illusions, and read historic and contemporary texts about the nature of light, the workings of vision, and the relation of light and vision to insight. You will also become familiar with the more technical aspects of working with light, including lenses, cameras, and digital media hardware.

News Literacy

An interdisciplinary course that provides students with the necessary analytical and critical-thinking abilities to sift information and recognize the difference between facts, inferences and opinion in the news content in a First Amendment environment where the number and variety of news delivery platforms has increased exponentially and a sense of information overload is pervasive. Designed to help students become more discerning news consumers empowered to act as responsible citizens in a democratic society.

North American Politics and Policies

While Canada, Mexico and United States are fairly distinct separate nations, they do constitute the "region" of North America. This is not just a region defined by geographical proximity, but one that has intertwined histories and economies, cultural overlaps, cross-border movements of populations, and most recently the creation of a complex major free trade zone (North American Free Trade Area - NAFTA). Numerous scholars and think tanks have hopes for even further economic and even political integration. This course is an exploration of the continent's national histories, current interactions and the possibilities for further development of a European type integration of the North America.

Reading W.E.B. Du Bois

This course centers on an examination of W.E.B. Du Bois' classic text *Souls of Black Folk*. The *Souls of Black Folk* combines, among other forms, classic elegy; autobiographical sketches; sociological studies; short fiction; theology; political protest; musicology; historical profiles; biblical allusion; and Greek mythology.

W.E.B Du Bois is a major thinker in the American political thought tradition and he has had a towering influence upon the study of race and racism in the United States. However, students rarely take the time to appreciate the entire sweep of his life's work; they typically stop short at a quick reading of the *Souls of Black Folk* and the famous metaphors of the "color line" and the African-American's double consciousness and veiled insightfulness. In this course, we will

discuss writing selections taken from every period of his scholarly progression, including the early historical sociology and lyrical commentaries on white supremacy; the political writings aimed at institution building, tactical maneuvering with and against white and black leaders alike, and the cultivation of a black elite; samples of his fiction, creative writing, and autobiographical iterations; and his socialist critiques of American militarism and imperialism during the Cold War.

Representations of Nature

Considers various ways that nature has been represented over time, from prehistoric cave paintings to modern Hollywood films; analyzes and compares environmental representations to each other; examines the current scientific knowledge and environmental context related to particular representations of nature.

Service Leadership

Provides an opportunity for emerging campus student leaders from any academic discipline to engage in service leadership projects where they can bring their academic knowledge and understanding as well as their developing leadership abilities to bear. Each student identifies a project, conducts thorough research regarding the problem issues associated, engages in service that addresses the problem and completes a major research paper regarding their effort. A background in the theory, practice and research of service learning and leadership will be presented.

The Changing North American Landscape

The technological conveniences and material prosperity that we enjoy in the 21st century United States is largely a product of how people have used the abundant natural resources of this continent. In addition, the negative environmental consequences we experience are also a product of our interactions with the landscape. When Europeans first arrived in North America just over 500 years ago, people had already been living in and interacting with the North American landscape for thousands of years. Overtime the landscape shaped the people and in turn the people shaped the landscape. Even thousands of years later, the effects of how people used their world is still evident. Further, the ways we use and influence nature will continue to shape the landscape for centuries and millennia to come. We will explore one central question throughout this course: how do people influence the environment and how does the environment influence people?

The Creative Economy of the Berkshires

An active research seminar focusing on the development of a rural creative economy through an exploration of the history, economic development theory, city planning, government granting, and creative place making and the direct application of those efforts in North Adams, MA. Students will investigate the economic, political, and cultural history of North Adams to generate a historical narrative of the progression from manufacturing center, to rustbelt community to an artist-belt center of activity. Students will also conduct audio interviews in the community exploring the history and current state of North Adams' creative place making efforts. Resulting research and audio interviews will be used in the development of an ongoing website resource featuring podcasts exploring the progression of North Adams as a rural creative economy.

The Physics Circus

A physics circus is a performance of oversized and awesome demonstrations. It links art and science through creation, production, and performance of a show designed to entertain and amaze audiences of all ages while helping them to learn basic science. The driving force behind this course is the notion that if people are presented with scientific phenomena in an engaging way, they will understand the science better, and they will be more likely to have a good attitude towards learning more science in the future. This course is suitable for all students, including those who have no background in either science or the theater.

The Postmodern Condition

Will explore a spectrum of "third alternatives" to the MacIntyre's Modernist dualism that have been forged in the last half of the twentieth century. The course will begin with a brief survey of Modernism's dualisms using the three "modern masters," Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Then the course will consider a range of proposals in the arts, in political science, in social and psychological theory, and in philosophy that have appeared as a simultaneous critique of Modernism and alternatives to it. One theme of the course will be the variety of intellectual positions (philosophical, aesthetic, social, gendered, etc.) that claim for themselves the sobriquet, "postmodern".