

UMBC Honors College Seminars

SPRING
2025



HONR 200-01: Invertebrate Neurobiology [4110]

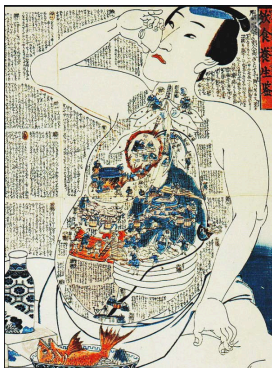
Instructor: Chan Lin, Honors College, Mon. 4:30-7:00pm, LIB 216M

Understanding how the brain works is one of the biggest challenges in science. In recent years, the development of neuroscience has drawn unprecedented resources and efforts worldwide; however, we are still awaiting an overarching theory regarding how any brain actually works. This seminar will introduce you to a range of historical and modern neuroscience topics, from the squid giant axon's action potentials to jellyfish biofluorescence, with a focus on the roles invertebrates play as critical research animals. As well, we will focus on some of the greatest discoveries in neuroscience, many of which are Nobel Prize-winning stories.

HONR 200-02: Disasters That Shaped Us [4562]

Instructor: Gary Williams, Honors College, Thur. 1:00-3:30pm, LIB 216M

This course will explore ten different disasters that have occurred around the world, leaving an undeniable impact on societies, cultures, and the environment. Through a multidisciplinary approach, students will dive into the impacts and responses to these crises – such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2011 Fukushima disaster, and the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak – in order to gain better insight into the ways these tragedies have shaped the course of human history. These topics will include technology, healthcare access, public health emergencies, and even criminal events to help students recognize the inhumane situations that people faced because of the disaster itself and, at times, human error. Finally, students will analyze the changes that were made because of these events in hopes to avoid or at least mitigate such disasters in the future.



HONR 300-01: Reading the Body in East Asia [3455]

Instructor: Julie Oakes, Honors College, Tu./Thur. 10:00-11:15am, LIB 216M

In East Asian history and culture, the body has been embedded in a more holistic approach than the western perspective, in that humans are seen as sociological beings whose physical states carry meaning to the wider community (rather than bodies being understood objectively and physiologically). Over the semester we will look at specific examples from China, Japan, and Korea that will illustrate this concept. For example, how was hair a signifier of female power in Japan—or filial piety in Korea? What did Chinese bound feet have to do with Confucian harmony? We will cover a wide range of topics, from the ancient past to the present, finishing up the semester with discussions about skin tone, organ transplantation, disordered eating, and the disabled body. No prior knowledge of East Asian history and culture is required!

HONR 300-02: Race, Poverty, and Gender in Baltimore [3456]

Instructor: Jodi Kelber-Kaye, Honors College, Wed. 1:00-3:30pm, Math/Physics 101

Social categories of race, class and gender provide structure for and organize people's lives. These categories intersect with one another, reinforce one another's effects, and can, at the same time, cut against one another. In this course, we will explore how these main social categories operate in the lives of people living (or who lived) in Baltimore. We will first explore how race, class, poverty, and gender are defined and then examine how they operate and interact within the context of Baltimore. As any city with a unique history, Baltimore provides a location through which we can examine social phenomena like block busting (neighborhood segregation), health disparities, food access, proliferation of crime and drugs, the judicial system, and more. Students will be engaged with projects in Baltimore. Some short papers and a longer final presentation/paper that incorporates the Baltimore work will be required.

HONR 300-03: Shakespeare and Free Will [3597]

Instructor: Greg Ealick, Philosophy, Tu/Th 8:30-9:45am, PAHB 456

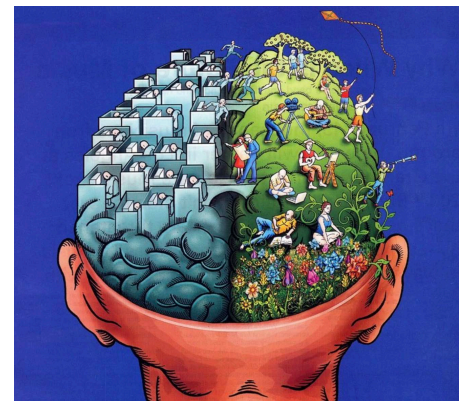


Whether we are free is an important question. Human decisions, relationships, and actions all seem to take on special value because we choose them; conversely, these things may appear to lose value if chosen for us. In this class, we will use Shakespeare to explore two different strategies for analyzing what comes with free will – or lack thereof. First, we will interrogate Shakespeare’s own position on free will, and second, we will use Shakespearean resources (such as his plays, how he portrays the human condition, and his knack for metaphor) to come to a contemporary and personal understanding of free will and determinism. While the medium is literature, the issues we will discuss pertain to disciplines such as physics, theology, neurology, political science, psychology, history, anthropology, and economics.

HONR 300-04: Your Brain on Nature [3848]

Instructors: Sarah Leupen and Cynthia Wagner, Biological Sciences, Mo/Wed 10:00-11:15am, ILSB 301

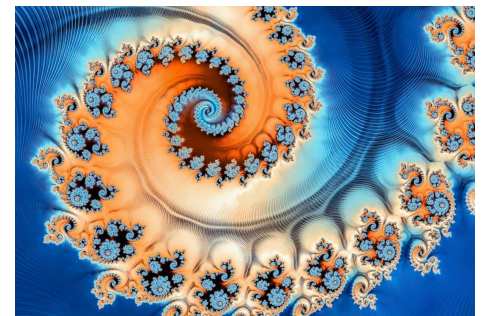
Are you someone who has always enjoyed the outdoors...or conversely considers yourself more of an “indoor” type? Well, this seminar is for both of you! This course aims to explore our interactions with nature by critically analyzing the data-supported benefits of spending time outside as well as identifying the barriers we sometimes have to being in nature. Topics include the neurobiology of stress, the effects of nature on mood and emotion, the socioeconomic disparities in access to nature, and even the benefits of ecotherapy and “forest bathing.” This seminar has something for all types of learners, such as cutting-edge readings, teamwork, whole-class discussions, and (optional) once-a-month weekend nature outings. We even hope to plan a camping trip at the end of the semester for anyone who wants to join! By the end of the semester we want you to have a deeper understanding of how you want to associate with nature in both your short and long term futures.



HONR 300-05: Mathematics of the Universe [3910]

Instructor: Manil Suri, Mathematics, Mo/Wed 1:00-2:15pm, LIB 216M

The course will engage students (both STEM and non-STEM) in ways of thinking about the design of the universe. Students will investigate philosophical and artistic questions, using logic and computer simulations, as they discover together how to build our universe and to engage in the playful opportunities available in mathematics. Please note that this course will be about mathematical ideas rather than calculation, so no prior math knowledge beyond high school algebra will be needed.



HONR 300-06: Sounds Like Social Justice [4010]

Instructor: Earl Brooks, English, Wed. 4:30-7:00pm, PUP 203

This course challenges students to think through issues of race, class, and gender in Sound Studies, at the intersection of communication, culture, and technology. Sound Studies joins musicology, history, anthropology, and critical theory and includes a diverse array of methodologies, including digital humanities, archival research, music analysis, sound recording, and ethnography. Students apply scholarship in Sound Studies to collaborative group projects, blogs, scripts, and personal reflections and will utilize technological devices (cameras, sound recorders, and microphones) to create their projects.



