Updated: January 24, 2013
Note: All seminars are two credits.

Spring 2013

IDSC 480-01 (CRN 23191) Honors Nature & Spirituality
Professors: Stephen Laumakis (Philosophy) and Mark Neuzil (Communications and Journalism)

From ancient texts to the present day, writers have been interested in the intersection of nature and spirituality. This course looks at works from Eastern (Buddhism, Daoism) and Western (primarily Christianity) traditions and compares and contrasts them.

IDSC 480-02 (CRN 23184) Honors Eating
Spring 2013 – T 1:30-3:10 OEC 210
Professors: Britain Scott (Psychology) and Christina Meyers-Jax (Registered dietitian)

“What? An Aquinas Scholars honors seminar on eating? Hello, that’s something I’ve known how to do since I was born! What could I possibly learn in a course on eating?!”

“I know, right?”

Or do you know?

This seminar will tackle the timely and relevant topics of why, how, and what we eat. Instructors’ expertise in the domains of psychology, nutrition, and environmental sustainability complement readings and films as we explore the following topics:
1. the diet industry and our disordered relationships with food
2. environmental, economic, social, and personal health implications of our food choices
3. American eating in a global context
4. the food industry, “food deserts,” and the link between energy resources and food
5. Restoring our connection to our food: mindful eating, the slow food movement, gardening, and foraging for wild foods

In this seminar we utilize a combination of scholarly discussion and experiential activities that may include visiting a farmer’s market, preparing a slow food meal (and eating it!), going on a foraging expedition (on campus!), and creating a personal eating plan. For more information, contact Britain Scott (Psychology & Environmental Studies) at bascott@stthomas.edu or Christina Meyer-Jax (Health & Human Performance) at meye5568@stthomas.edu.

IDSC 480-03 (CRN 23552) Honors Eating
Spring 2013 – T 3:25-5:00 OEC 210
Professors: Britain Scott (Psychology) and Christina Meyers-Jax (Registered dietitian)

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IDSC 480-05 (CRN 21863) Honors World Music & Culture
Spring 2013 – M 3:25-5:00 OEC 313
Professors: Chris Kachian (Music Undergrad) and Bob Werner (Geography)

This course will analyze how the histories and cultures of various societies in the world use music in their cultural contexts or as rituals, and contrast it with the Western perspective of music as a cultural product, or as entertainment.

In this course, you will learn how to connect music with the culture that produces it. What is the function and context of a culture’s music? On what occasions do people play it? What religion or ideology or history does their music express? Do the materials they use in their instruments reflect the physical surroundings in which they live? Who participates in the music? Are gender roles different? Is the music accompanied by other activities like dance, dress, or ceremony?

For example, consider the music of the Andes. It is traditionally played by all village men and older boys on instruments made of local materials, including armadillo shells, cane, wood, bone, and animal skin. It is much more important that all men and boys play, rather than playing the “right” notes. It is a communal activity that bonds people together, so is played at carnivals, weddings, and funerals. Women dance modestly to the side, in regalia woven from two of the four camelid animals who live there (llamas or alpacas) in colors that represent their local village. The music can be sad, lamenting the loss of land and culture at the hands of the conquistadors; it often expresses their heartfelt bonds to Pachamama; or can simply pine for a girl away at college.

The teachers will model this inquiry in the first six weeks of the course, relating music and culture in five case studies: Native American plains Indians, Jamaica, West Africa, the Hmong, and the Asmat of western New Guinea. During this time, you will chose a culture and plan your own such synthesis through a prospectus discussed in and evaluated by the class. Thereafter, you will individually investigate the music and culture you chose, culminating in a paper you present to the class. This presentation should teach your peers, and include clips of representative music, and use of graphics to show the music’s context.

IDSC 480-06 (CRN 21328) Honors Foreign Experience
Spring 2013 – R 5:15-6:45 MHC 211
Professors: Lon Otto (English Undergrad) and Amy Muse (English)

This seminar—which students take both before they depart for study abroad and upon their return—gives Aquinas Scholars who study abroad the opportunity to 1) examine ways of approaching, understanding, and articulating the impact of foreign experience; 2) practice the techniques of observation, exploration, and self-reflection exemplified in the materials studied; and 3) communicate the particular discoveries that resulted from their experience abroad.

Please note: You must begin your work in the seminar before going abroad, and you must reserve the Thursday 5:15–6:45 class times both before and after your study abroad semester or year. The Spring 2012 meetings of the Foreign Experience Seminar will be determined in the near future. However, you don’t register for The Foreign Experience seminar until you register for other courses to be taken the semester you return to St. Thomas. Just show up to the first meeting. Questions? Contact Lon Otto l9otto@stthomas.edu or Amy Muse ammuse@stthomas.edu.
Can a human person be owned? Can one person be the private property of another? What is the relationship between revenge and justice? Between law and morality? Is someone who refuses to abide by social customs “guilty?” These are themes that have been explored in literature and debated in the law for centuries. Sometimes literature explores the human drama that comes about as the result of unjust legal systems, sometimes the law itself provides the drama in harrowing courtroom scenes.

We will explore these questions through a fascinating selection of novels, plays, and films dealing with such contentious topics as: religion, delinquency, sex (consensual and not), killing as a form of justice, and property rights! The course will explore basic issues of jurisprudence for those with an interest in further legal study, although no prior knowledge of law is necessary. We invite you to join us for this exploration of the dramatic aspects of the tension between individual freedom and social cohesion.

Selected list of course materials:
Sophocles, Antigone
Shakespeare, Measure for Measure
Camus, The Stranger
Lee, To Kill a Mocking Bird
Films: “The Sea Within”; “The Castle”