

**AQUINAS SCHOLARS**  
**Honors Seminars**  
**Summer 2017**

**Date:** Updated June 15, 2017

**Note:** All seminars are two credits.

Honors seminars are all published in the Schedule of Classes under IDSC. Honors seminars all have a course number of IDSC 480. The word "Honors" or an abbreviation of honors, such as "HONR," is at the beginning of the course title.

Please contact Erica Berglund at [berg7582@stthomas.edu](mailto:berg7582@stthomas.edu) if you have any questions.

**Summer 2017 – 1<sup>st</sup> Session**

**IDSC 480-1 (CRN 30073) – Honors At the Borders of Physics and Theology: Fine Tuning**

Summer 2017 – TR 10:15 AM -12:15 PM      Location: JRC 222

1st Summer Session (May 24 – July 6)

Faculty: Jeffrey Jalkio (Engineering) and Philip Rolnick (Theology)

For about the last 100 years discoveries in physics have surprised, even shocked, many physicists, while these same discoveries have given a boost to the theological claim that God created the universe. Chief among these surprises has been that the universe began in a hot big bang. What so shocked many scientists is that the universe had a beginning. Big bang theory has led scientists to think what Christians and Jews have long believed – that the universe had a beginning.

Equally surprising to many scientists and also very pleasing to theologians has been the discovery of what is called "fine-tuning." It turns out that the early universe is full of "coincidences" in which the basic forces that govern the physical universe – forces like gravity and electromagnetism – had to be remarkably balanced in order to develop a universe that could produce galaxies, stars, planets, and, eventually, us. One writer colorfully described fine-tuning in the following way. Imagine standing before a firing squad of 50 of the world's greatest marksmen, but when the order to fire is given, all 50 of the marksmen miss you. As it turns out, the chances of our physical universe evolving to support life are far, far smaller than surviving this fictitious firing squad. In other words, the universe looks as if it has been finely tuned by a superintellect.

This course, which will be offered by a physics professor and a theologian, will explore the details of both big bang theory and fine-tuning. That there was a big bang and subsequent fine-tuning is not controversial. How to interpret the big bang and fine-tuning is very controversial. This course will lay out the details in a way that bright students, who are not necessarily trained in math and physics, can understand. Those who have training in math and physics are welcome, but such training is not required to understand the material presented.

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**Summer 2017 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**IDSC 480-3 (CRN 30414) – Honors Font Design: History and Practice**

Summer 2017 – TR 10:00 AM -12:00 PM      Location: OEC LL13

2nd Summer Session (July 10 – August 17)

Faculty: Craig Eliason (Art History)

**NOTE:** This seminar DOES NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Craig Eliason ([cdeliason@stthomas.edu](mailto:cdeliason@stthomas.edu), 651-962-5595) directly if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

Nearly everybody who has used word-processing software has toyed with changing the font and examining how the character of their written text changes. With the advent of the Font menu, popular awareness of type design has grown sharply in the last few decades. This growing awareness, however, usually lacks both a subtle grasp of how the details and proportions of letterforms convey character, and an informed understanding of the historical contexts out of which the designs appeared. How do typeface designs work and from where do they come? These are questions that can be answered by an approach simultaneously founded in historical and practical work.

In this course, students will undertake designs of a digital fonts based on study of historical models. They will develop graphic design skills, create functional letterforms, and polish their creations through critique and revision. Alongside this

practical work, students will share their research on the historical designs inspiring their work that were produced over the last 500 years.

We live in a text-filled world, and we encounter each of these written texts in a specific visual form that constitutes, even if in a subliminal way, part of its message. Students will leave this course with a more sophisticated understanding of the history of type design and of the letterforms they see every day.

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**IDSC 480-4 (CRN 30080) – Honors Cultural Evolution and the History of Conceptions of Happiness**

Summer 2017 – TR 1:00 PM -3:00 PM                      Location: MHC 211

2nd Summer Session (July 10 – August 17)

Faculty: Ryan Bremner (Psychology)

**NOTE: This seminar DOES NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member.** Please contact Ryan Bremner (brem0559@stthomas.edu, 651-962-5023) directly if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

Cultures differ from each other in dramatic ways. They also grow and change. In this course we will explore the fundamentals of that change, by examining the relatively new field of cultural evolution. Cultural evolution integrates insights from psychology, philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology, and other related fields in order to better understand how the differences between cultures have arisen, how cultures have grown and changed over time, and how these cultural changes affect people's everyday lives. After covering these fundamentals, we will apply them to the evolution of conceptions of happiness in the Europe and the Americas, including the current dominant conception of happiness in the United States. We will also explore the impact of this conception of happiness (in some cases quite negative) on individual human lives and decisions.

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