

AQUINAS SCHOLARS
Honors Seminars
J-Term 2018

Date: **UPDATED November 15, 2017**

Note: All seminars are two credits.

Honors seminars are all published in the Schedule of Classes under HONR. Honors seminars all have a course number of HONR 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 if you have any questions.

J-Term 2018

HONR 480-L01 (CRN 10224) – Honors Evolution and Theology: Challenges and Responses

J-Term 2018 – TR 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Location: JRC 246

Faculty: Philip Rolnick (Theology) and Jayna Ditty (Biology)

Through discussion of assigned readings, class lectures, and Power Points, this Aquinas Scholars course will examine some of the toughest challenges of evolution for religious faith. The two professors will argue that it is not a question of choosing either evolution or theology; to the contrary, the professors will show how evolutionary biology and theology are compatible. In fact, it will be shown how evolutionary biology can actually be an aid to advanced theological understanding, how each biological challenge can be turned to theological advantage. In both evolution and Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), growth is demanded and standing still is forbidden.

In the first challenge, random mutations and natural selection call into question divine design. Second, because natural selection gives rise to winners and losers, the idea that God loves all is called into question. Third, the neo-Darwinian depiction of struggle, pain, and death questions the goodness of creation and its Creator. Fourth, the common ancestry of humans and other animals (like chimps), first hypothesized by Darwin and then strongly confirmed by genetic studies, challenges human uniqueness.

In response to the first challenge, it will be shown that randomness is always played out on a more basic ground of law, that science itself is not possible without lawful, dependable, and repeatable pattern. Randomness is a vital part of the story, but not the whole story, because (successful) mutations give rise to novelty and biodiversity—which we must have if creation is to be creative. To the second challenge, it will be shown that natural selection has teaching value for life—now and in eternity. To the third, that there is a purpose in struggle, pain, and death. And to the fourth, that humans share some things with other animals, but are in many crucial ways, unique.

HONR 480-02 (CRN 10225) – Honors Paradox of Connectivity and the Power of Associative Thinking

J-Term 2018 – TR 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM Location: BEC 111

Faculty: Ora Itkin (Undergraduate Music)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Ora Itkin directly (ositkin@stthomas.edu) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

The purpose of this seminar is to broaden our awareness of the powerful benefits of associative thinking, a fundamental element of our intersubjective connectivity. Why, within a world of increasing connection, do we become progressively disconnected from each other? The answer lies in the gap between learned concepts and our lived experiences.

Each class will take on the spirit of a philosophical forum, a science laboratory, and an artist's workshop so as to integrate critical thought, scientific inquiry, and creative expression. The seminar will provide an avenue for the appreciation of art and music beyond their conventional value as disciplines. Exploring artistic expression can help us acknowledge the contradictory dualities (e.g., reality and illusion, self and other, essence and appearance) in how we perceive the world around us.

Finally, as we transition from the abstract to the practical, each student will build his/her own "matrix of connectivity." In the context of their diverse life experiences, we will discover how art gives rise to the emotion of empathy, whereby our minds truly connect.

HONR 480-03 (CRN 10226) – Honors Contemplative Practices

J-Term 2018 – TR 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Location: OEC 212

Faculty: Susan Stabile (Law School)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Susan Stabile directly (sjstabile@stthomas.edu) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

Contemplation is a part of every spiritual tradition and is increasingly recognized as a helpful component of a liberal arts education and professional development. Even many who do not consider themselves religious engage in various forms of contemplative practices. Contemplation leads to greater self-awareness and compassion, as well as increased concentration and well-being. This course will introduce you to contemplative practices from different spiritual and humanistic traditions, giving you the opportunity to learn from your own experience of them. You will also learn from the writings of practitioners ranging from Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross to Thich Nhat Hanh and BKS Iyengar. Note that there will be a significant experiential and community based learning component to the course.

HONR 480-04 (CRN 10227) – Honors Improvisation and Mental Health

J-Term 2018 – TR 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM Location: JRC 401

Faculty: Jim Robinson (Psychology)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Jim Robinson directly (jim@tablesaltproductions.com) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

The ability to tolerate ambiguity is essential to mental health. In this course, students will explore this premise by learning the fundamentals of improvisation and discovering how these skills can enrich their lives and make them more flexible, effective, and empathic, both personally and professionally. Connections to psychology, mindfulness, and collaboration will be emphasized.

HONR 480-05 (CRN 10237) – Honors Civil War Era Citizenship

J-Term 2018 – TR 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM Location: OEC 310

Faculty: David Williard (History)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder as registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact David Williard directly (will0208@stthomas.edu) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

The Civil War, the emancipation of the slaves, the passage of three major constitutional amendments, and the process of reconstructing the United States gave rise to many of the most influential Supreme Court decisions in American history. Due to disciplinary boundaries and research methods, however, this era is rarely explored as an integration of legal change and social context. This course proposes to change that by blending historical and legal methodologies to examine this pivotal period in the development of citizenship in the United States.
