

AQUINAS SCHOLARS
Honors Seminars
J-Term 2023

Date: August 16, 2022

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 or HONR 481. The word "Honors" or an abbreviation of honors, such as "HONR," is at the beginning of the course title.

Please contact Erica Berglund at erica.berglund@stthomas.edu if you have any questions.

J-Term 2023

HONR 480-01 (CRN 10055) - Honors Improvisation and Mental Health

J-Term 2023 - **01/03/2023 thru 01/17/23**

- MTWRF 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
- Location: JRC 481 (In Person)

Faculty: Jim Robinson (Psychology)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder because 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. Extensive readings on positive psychology, mindfulness, psychopathology, vagal tone, and traditional therapeutic modalities will be used to illuminate the ways an improvisational mindset undergirds and enhances psychological treatments.

HONR 480-L02 (CRN 10046) - Honors Film Music as Propaganda and Political Resistance

J-Term 2023 - TR 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM Location: BEC 110 (In Person)

Faculty: Christopher Kachian (Music) and Jim Snapko (Film Studies)

The purpose of this seminar is to explore the narrative connections between film and music as used in political expression. Films from all over the world will be addressed. The course begins with an introduction to film history and practice. Instructors provide the theoretical perspective to film, e.g. the language filmmakers use to create meaning -through editing, cinematography, acting, screenplay -coupled with examining key characteristics of orchestration, and the concept of sound as "interpretation." Some basic questions we will consider are: What do we learn about a filmmaker's creative decision making through the marriage of film and music as propaganda messaging? How does the film score reinforce, amplify, identify, or fortify the political messages of the film? What ideas or expressions are presented and prolonged with the music? How does music

enhance these ideas? What issues are in conflict or opposition? How are they illuminated or resolved in the music? How does that influence the ongoing story? How is it characteristic or unique? What film techniques are used to express the ideological ideas and themes in the film without the aid of the music?

This seminar counts toward the following core requirements:

- **Writing to Learn (Writing Across the Curriculum)**

HONR 480-03 (CRN 10045) - Honors Gnosticism, Hollywood, and Emerging Technology

J-Term 2023 - TR 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Location: MHC 211 (In Person)

Faculty: Tim Ketcher (Ethics & Business Law)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder because registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Tim Ketcher directly (ketc3091@stthomas.edu) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

In recent decades, several Hollywood films have centered around story lines that present a Gnostic vision of the world. These movies explore themes that offer an alternative, if not subversive, understanding of the nature of the world, our place in it, and what the future holds as well. Movies such as "The Matrix," "AI," "Blade Runner," "Tron," and "The Truman Show," portray a world where psychological and/or physical imprisonment are a function of false consciousness and technology.

In Klaus Schwab's 2019 book, *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Schwab, the head of the World Economic Forum, presents a vision of the future where powerful algorithms, machine learning, nano technology, and AI structure and manage almost every facet of life. In important respects, Schwab's vision of the future bears striking similarities to the dystopian worlds presented in many Gnostic-inspired films produced by Hollywood. What, then, do these movies tell us about what it means to be human in a technologically advanced world? What place do rights and justice have in these possible futures? We will explore answers to these questions and whether these movies are simply cautionary tales meant to criticize emerging technology or if they are meant to prepare us to accept new ways of thinking about being human, the self, and the Good.

HONR 481-04 (CRN 10270) - Honors The Art of Thinking:

Creative Problem-Solving in the Digital Age

J-Term 2023 - TR 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Location: JRC 481 (In Person)

Faculty: Susan Shields (Dougherty Family College)

NOTE: This seminar will NOT appear in Class Finder because registration for a one-professor seminar is controlled by the faculty member. Please contact Susan Shields directly (shie3070@stthomas.edu) if you would like to be enrolled in this seminar.

When I was an undergraduate, there was no internet; we all had to carry information around in our heads since we did not yet have the capacity to "just google it." Author Daniel Pink explains in his book *A Whole New Mind* that this period of time in which I went to college was the 'Informational

Age.' Today is, by comparison, the 'Conceptual Age', which requires a generation of Whole New Minds, ready and able to do the most with the abundance of information at everyone's fingertips. The 21st Century needs those who can conceive of the best possible solutions to large, real-world problems, such as global warming and gross social injustices. We need creative problem-solvers who can use metaphorical thinking to recognize connections between relevant data. This course will explore creativity, as well as the interdisciplinary field of Cognitive Science which examines the human brain and how it functions. Your very best "tool" is your mind; you will learn how your perceptions bring information in, how your brain makes sense of it all (or not), and how you can make the most using your unique interests and aptitudes. The more you understand about the workings of your own mind, the more effective you can be in all aspects of your life. This thinking about your thinking- or metacognition- is at the root of all the topics and activities in this course. You will learn how to sharpen your best tool and use it for The Common Good.

This seminar counts toward the following core requirements:

- ***Integrations in the Humanities***
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