Dietrich College Interdisciplinary Courses

About Course Numbers:

Each Carnegie Mellon course number begins with a two-digit prefix that designates the department offering the course (i.e., 76-xxx courses are offered by the Department of English). Although each department maintains its own course numbering practices, typically, the first digit after the prefix indicates the class level: xx-1xx courses are freshmen-level, xx-2xx courses are sophomore level, etc. Depending on the department, xx-6xx courses may be either undergraduate senior-level or graduate-level, and xx-7xx courses and higher are graduate-level. Consult the Schedule of Classes (https://jen-apps.as.cmu.edu/open/SCC/SCCServlet) each semester for course offerings and for any necessary pre-requisites or co-requisites.

66-103 HSP First-Year Seminar: Appalachia (for HSP students only) Fall: 9 units

The Appalachian region - which stretches from Georgia to New York's southern plateau - has a particular place in American history and memory. This course will examine the political, literary, economic and historical narratives that surround the region, as well as examining the role that Appalachia can play as a model for developing regions in other parts of the world. This course fulfills the First-Year Seminar requirement for the Humanities Scholars Program. Enrollment is restricted to first-year HSP students.

66-106 QSSS First-Year Seminar: Applied Quantitative Social Science I (QSSS students) Fall: 9 units

The QSSS First-Year Seminar provides a fast-paced introduction to a range of methods in the quantitative social sciences. Organized around a set of case studies, the course introduces the language and methods of empirical research through a combination of seminar-style discussions of academic papers, and hands-on lab work using the statistical software R. Students will replicate results from a high-profile labor market discrimination paper, explore agent-based models of neighborhood segregation, and scrape Wikipedia data to examine imbalances in gender representation. Enrollment restricted to first-year QSSS students.

66-107 First-Year Seminar: Modeling Complex Systems Fall: 9 units

Most of the major issues confronting humanity—such as climate change, financial collapse, ecosystem survival, terrorism, and disease epidemics—are the result of complex systems where the interactions of the pieces of the system create a whole that is rather different than any of its parts. Unfortunately, traditional scientific methods that focus on reducing systems to their parts and then analyzing each part provide little insight into such systems. This seminar explores the behavior of complex systems as well as how to model and understand them using both traditional tools and computer-based approaches.

66-109 Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Climate Change Fall and Spring: 9 units

Many consider climate change to be the most serious social, political, and environmental issue of the 21st century. As human activities increase the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, scientists have established the reality of climate change and have estimated its impacts on human society and the natural world. Despite the scientific consensus on its existence, causes, and consequences, a substantial number of Americans and citizens of other countries still question these conclusions and a small but vocal group of doubters continue to challenge the science and scientific consensus on climate change. In spite of some social division over these issues, governments at local, national, and international levels have made concerted efforts to craft policies to address climate change. These policies have shifted over time as the information, attitudes, and technology associated with climate change have evolved. In this course, we will explore the challenges and complexities of climate change by investigating the subject from a variety of angles: scientific, political, rhetorical, cultural, economic, technological, and ethical. Over the course of the semester, we will inquire: What is climate change? How do scientists know it is happening? Why is there public debate over it? What solutions are available? And what are the pros and cons of the different solutions?

66-110 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Inequality Intermittent: 9 units

This Grand Challenge first-year seminar on inequality is inspired in part by the specter of global income inequality. Income inequality has reached such a peak that eight men own as much wealth as half the world's population, the world's poorest 3.6 billion people. Inequality may be a feature of all societies across history to some degree. But inequality strikes us as especially timely topic because of the current demands for greater political, social, and economic equality. The four of us will use the disciplines we come from - economics, anthropology, history, psychology, and literary/cultural studies - to introduce you to the concept of inequality in the age of capitalism. We will consider how inequality emerged as a social and political problem in the 18th and 19th centuries, and how it has re-emerged as a key concept for socio-political movements in our current moment. We will conclude with an inquiry into what the future of inequality might look like, especially with the coming of increased automation and the elimination of at least 50% of the jobs currently being done by human beings.

66-114 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Racism Intermittent: 9 units

Racism is everywhere in the twenty-first century. In August 2009, the renowned Indian actor, Sharukh Khan, was detained at Newark International Airport. According to Khan, his Muslim surname led American immigration officials to question him about the nature of his visit for over two hours. Was his treatment racist? In 2011, Luis Suarez a Uruguayan soccer player was punished for allegedly calling French footballer Patrice Evra "negro" in England. But was the word "negro," said in Spanish, racist? Racism is a complex phenomenon that refers to historically hierarchical power differences between groups (e.g. Native populations and Europeans during the conquest), ideas about how humans can be classified into groups by "race," and also discriminatory practices against non-dominant groups. This system of social relations and ideology serves to justify social inequality and differential treatment. If we are to end racism, we must strive to understand it. What are the historical origins of racism? How is racism reproduced? How does race influence identity formation? Can racism produce positive identities? Why has the struggle against racism shifted from a demand for human rights to a search for diversity and inclusion? This course will examine racism in Pittsburgh, in the United States, and in several other countries and regions throughout the world. We will approach racism from multiple academic perspectives with a team of three faculty from the departments of History, English and Modern Languages. This team-based interdisciplinary approach to First-Year Seminars draws on several departments and guest speakers.

66-117 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Political Rhetoric Fall: 9 units

Without language, there would be no politics. Politics is about persuading others to adopt policies, to vote for candidates, to get out and march. Politics is about careful choices of language to frame issues, to make others see those issues in our preferred way. In this course, we will put the rhetoric of politics under the microscope, to identify its components and understand how they fit together into a powerful structure. We will use the tools of multiple disciplines in our analysis: rhetorical theory, both ancient and modern; cognitive science; contemporary discourse analysis; ethics; and philosophy of language. We will ask what it means for political rhetoric to be propaganda. We'll explore how political advertising uses marketing techniques, taking advantage of our innate biases and cognitive dispositions. We will look at how a skillful speaker can control the topic in a dialogue or a debate. And throughout, we will ask the question: is this ethical? Where does persuasion cross the boundary into manipulation, and does that matter? What type of rhetoric do we want our political process to rely on? Our goal in this course is to provide students with the skills to recognize the rhetorical tools that political agents are using, and to develop their own responses in a skillful and informed way.
66-118 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Thinking With Evidence
Fall: 9 units
In a time of big data and widespread skepticism of science, it is crucial to understand how data and facts can be turned into conclusions, and then into public policy. Using topics from medicine, epidemiology, and public health, this course provides students an introduction into the grand challenge of understanding how evidence is used (and abused) in support of scientific conclusions. Questions of health and safety any important areas for thinking about facts and figures because many life-or-death decisions have to be made on the basis of fragmentary and unreliable evidence. Every trip to the doctor, illness, and vaccination involves a complicated mix of public policy, scientific evidence, and emotional appeal and personal narrative. This course helps students understand the sciences and the humanities as united in their desire for rigorous argumentation rather than as competing or incompatible ways of thinking. Moreover, by taking a wide-angle lens to the topic, students will see how and why standards of scientific proof have changed over time, and track how what these changes mean for thinking about evidence. Co-taught by a statistician and historian, this course draws on many different disciplines, providing students a broad introduction to reasoning across the humanities and social sciences. Students will be required to participate in written and oral arguments, read scientific articles as well as political, historical, and legal documents, and prepare a capstone project in which they will be asked to weigh real-life evidence and recommend a course of action to the Food and Drug Administration. Other topics may include vaccination controversies, regulation of carcinogens and toxic chemicals, mammography screening standards, and the treatment of infectious diseases in global health settings.

66-119 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Feeding the World, Feeding Ourselves
Fall: 9 units
Food in the twenty-first century is ripe with paradox: fewer people than ever work as farmers or ranchers, but the quantity and global variety of foods available to consumers continues to expand; public health officials around the world are raising alarms about diseases linked to the over-consumption of fats and sugars, even as hundreds of millions of people do not know where their next meal is coming from; organic agriculture is booming, while agribusiness giants like Monsanto continue to expand. Producing food consumes more land and water resources than any other human activity. The individual and collective decisions people make about food shape individual and community health, social justice, and sustainability. If we are to make sound decisions about how to feed the world and feed ourselves, we need to understand the highly creative and contentious ways that people produce and consume food. In this class we will address the following central questions in order to unravel some paradoxes, and help us make informed choices, about foods we consume: (1) What are the origins of agriculture and why do we care about diseases linked to the over-consumption of fats and sugars? (2) How do cultural, ecological, economic, and technological contexts shape food acquisition, preparation, and consumption? (3) What are the causes of hunger - can we feed 8 billion people healthy food and not trash the planet? (4) What role does science and technology play in shaping “industrial food,” and in shaping the world around us?

66-120 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Beyond Earth
Spring: 9 units
Space, as a television series once told us, is the final frontier. But what lies out there? It could be that the billions of rocky planets and moons in the Milky Way are just inert and ready to be terraformed and colonized...but what happens when we encounter life, intelligent or otherwise? In Beyond Earth, co-taught by an astrostatistician and a linguist, students will consider the various rationales for engaging with the rest of the galaxy...and the potential consequences of doing so. Why should one consider leaving the Earth, and where would he or she go just to Mars, or to other planetary systems? How long would it take to get to these other systems? The distances involved in space travel are immense, and we cannot rely on warp drives. Inter-generational space travel is a possibility, but who is willing to leave Earth and spend the rest of his or her life on board a spaceshipe? When one's descendants finally arrive in a suitable planetary system, what happens if they find life? If so, what should they do - communicate with it, control it, or fly away from it? Perhaps these are the wrong questions...perhaps we need to ask if humans have the right to occupy other planets and moons in the first place. But even if we choose not to leave Earth, there will still be the issue of communication: from radio signals to satellites leaving the Solar System to proposed light sails that will be pushed to the nearest stars, we are making ourselves known. Should we do this? And if we send signals into space, how should we design them to make ourselves understood? What should we talk about? Just how should we go about engaging with the rest of our galaxy? By the end of the course, every student will be able to make an informed and passionate decision to stay on Earth and improve what we all have, or strike out into the great Beyond?

66-123 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Science on Stage
Spring: 9 units
Art and Science — two fields of study that are most often considered diametrically opposed. Art is frivolous entertainment. Science is hard rational fact. In this Grand Challenge course, we hope to break that supposition or at least examine it in great detail. Specifically, we will use theater to argue that drama can produce challenging, demanding and intelligent work that showcases the impact of science on current discourse. We want to link the two cultures. The word “theater” has the same etymological root as ‘theory’ - both words come from the Greek thea meaning view. This shared origin demonstrates ways we can work to analyze and interpret both fields and show the common ground between these two cultures. As we attend to plays and writing ranging from Tom Stoppard’s Arcadia and Michael Frayn’s Copenhagen to Caryl Churchill’s A Number and Oliver Sacks’s Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat, our class discussions will consider questions that include: Why is science a trend in contemporary theater? Does it reflect on our dependence on technology? What kinds of questions are being asked when science or scientific theory is presented on the stage? Are people attracted to plays about science because of their difficult subject matter or does it lack the engagement of popular culture? In addition to integrating humanities and scientific approaches within Dietrich College, this course will utilize the expertise of both individuals in the School of Drama and the producers in the local theater community, and local science writers. Finally, in addition to weekly writing assignments, the course will ask students to produce original dramatic scenes that incorporate scientific exploration which will, ultimately, lead to staged readings of their work.

66-161 DC Grand Challenge First-Year Seminar: Artificial Intelligence and Humanity
Fall and Spring: 9 units
In 1965 British mathematician I.J. Good wrote, “An ultraintelligent machine could design even better machines; there would then unquestionably be an ‘intelligence explosion,’ and the intelligence of man would be left far behind.” As we enter an age where companies like Uber are testing driverless cars in Pittsburgh and innovative interfaces like IBM’s Watson can play jeopardy and learn techniques for medical diagnoses, how are we to negotiate an ‘intelligence explosion’ that for many individuals might threaten the very notions of what it means to be human? The future of human-to-machine relationships will likely define our historical epoch and yet, many young technologists and humanists underestimate the downstream impact of technological innovations on human society. Presently, we have little choice but to attend to this rapidly anxiety-ridden question. This seminar will attend to the challenge of contemporary existential questions on what it means to be human (read not machine) in the context of a rapidly advancing technological age. We will consider human narratives throughout history that examine how governments and individual citizens defined humanity in the context of slavery and colonialism as a framework for exploring and projecting what it means to be human in the age of rapidly advancing ‘intelligent’ machines. We will trace the technological advancements of the recent five decades and identify historical precedents and speculative narratives that help us to consider issues like labor, economic disparity, negotiations of power, human dignity and ethical responsibility within the context of human relations with advancing technological tools that are now coined, artificial intelligence.

66-202 Pathways: Dietrich College Career Exploration Seminar
Intermittent: 3 units
Designed for Dietrich College students, this seminar will assist students in effective career decision making, development of internship and job search skills, and workplace readiness. Students will participate in activities involving self-reflection/self-awareness, major and career exploration, personal branding techniques, and communication skills. We will invite guest speakers including alumni, employers, and on-campus resources. Students will also be required to participate in an evening networking event with alumni throughout the country.
During the last class meeting, all students will participate in critiques of the course's end—(a) a written, formal preliminary thesis statement and (where appropriate), acting as co-leader for at least one session, and - (e.g., stem cell research, which calls into play science, ethics, etc.). Course topics may include topics that lend themselves to interdisciplinary discussion and debate (e.g., speakers invited to address and engage class members in discussion/debate presentations; intellectual property rights, and human subjects policy. Guest visitors may bring their knowledge; funding for research; preparing for and delivering effective poster presentations); ethics in research; "interdisciplinarity," or the "unity of meaning(s) of "honors;" getting started and keeping pace: the ebb and flow of an independent research project (including how to recognize and avoid procrastination; forging a successful relationship with your thesis advisor - the myth of the separation of research from writing; writing for publication); ethics in research; "interdisciplinarity," or the "unity of knowledge;" funding for research; preparing for and delivering effective presentations; intellectual property rights, and human subjects policy. Guest speakers invited to address and engage class members in discussion/debate of topics that lend themselves to interdisciplinary discussion and debate (e.g., stem cell research, which calls into play science, ethics, etc.). Course requirements will include mandatory attendance, occasional readings (where appropriate), acting as co-leader for at least one session, and - at course's end - (a) a written, formal preliminary thesis statement and action plan, endorsed by the thesis advisor, and tentatively, (b) a brief oral presentation of the thesis statement and plan to the class - all prepared during the last class meeting. All students will participate in critiques of fellow-students' presentations and plans.

66-204 Film Festival
Spring
Students will take on the project of planning and managing a film festival that draws a college- and city-wide audience. Students will collaborate on all aspects of the festival: selecting films, generating and distributing marketing materials, designing and scheduling events, arranging facilities and general logistics, coordinating internal and external public relations, organizing fundraisers, rallying the local communities—in short, all the aspects involved in making the event a spectacular/sensational success! A unique feature of this course-cum-festival will be several directors' participation as guest speakers on the festival theme and other issues informing their films. Previous Film Festivals have covered such topics as: Democracy, Mechanization, Realism, Globalization, Migration, Media and Work. This course is also designed to supplement the study of film with the historical, political and sociological background that students need for critically analyzing the images and ideologies they see on the screen and understand how those images effect our views of the past and present time.

66-221 Topics of Law: Introduction to Intellectual Property Law
Interruption: 9 units
Topics for this course vary, to include such foci as intellectual property, introduction to U.S. law, great American trials, and the U.S. Constitution. Topics and courses are designed to be broadly relevant and interesting for university undergraduates, and not narrowly tailored for students interested in law school.

66-304 DC Grand Challenge Research Seminar
Interruption: 9 units
TBA

66-307 Independent Study
All Semesters
This course is intended for students with a special interest in an interdisciplinary area in the humanities and/or social sciences not covered by a normal course. Readings and other works are developed by the student and an individual faculty member. The number of units will be assigned at the time of registration based on the number of hours to be completed (decided in advance with the sponsoring faculty member).

66-320 Internship
All Semesters
Internships-for-credit allow students to apply course-based knowledge in a non-classroom setting, under joint supervision and evaluation by an on-site supervisor and a faculty sponsor. Approved internships must conform to college guidelines for internships-for-credit, and are available by permission only arranged through the Associate Dean's Office in Baker Hall 154.

66-400 Dietrich College Senior Honors Colloquium
Fall: 1 unit
The purpose of this course is to provide students admitted to the Dietrich College Senior Honors Program with a shared set of intellectual and practical skills that will enhance their senior honors thesis experience. The course will consist of seven bi-weekly 80-minute meetings. Each will be organized around a theme and related topics that are relevant to the senior honors thesis experience, and that take advantage of both the high caliber and interdisciplinary diversity of the course members. Guest visitors will also be a common feature of the course. Topics could include: the meaning(s) of "honors;" getting started and keeping pace: the ebb and flow of an independent research project (including how to recognize and avoid procrastination; forging a successful relationship with your thesis advisor - the myth of the separation of research from writing; writing for publication); ethics in research; "interdisciplinarity," or the "unity of knowledge;" funding for research; preparing for and delivering effective presentations; intellectual property rights, and human subjects policy. Guest speakers invited to address and engage class members in discussion/debate of topics that lend themselves to interdisciplinary discussion and debate (e.g., stem cell research, which calls into play science, ethics, etc.). Course requirements will include mandatory attendance, occasional readings (where appropriate), acting as co-leader for at least one session, and - at course's end - (a) a written, formal preliminary thesis statement and action plan, endorsed by the thesis advisor, and tentatively, (b) a brief oral presentation of the thesis statement and plan to the class - all prepared during the last class meeting. All students will participate in critiques of fellow-students' presentations and plans.

66-501 H&SS Senior Honors Thesis I
Fall and Spring: 9 units
This sequence is open only to those seniors who have been admitted to the H&SS Senior Honors Program. This is the first semester of a two-semester sequence that culminates in an original, year-long independent research or creative project. Thesis topics are selected by faculty and students.
Course Website: http://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/undergraduate/programs/shp/index.html

66-502 H&SS Senior Honors Thesis II
Fall and Spring: 9 units
This sequence is open only to those seniors who have been admitted to the H&SS Senior Honors Program. This second semester course is the culmination of an original, year-long independent research project. Research topics are selected by faculty and students.
Prerequisite: 66-501
Course Website: http://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/undergraduate/programs/shp/index.html

66-503 Dietrich College Senior Honors Thesis
All Semesters: 18 units
This course is a one-semester alternative to the two-semester Dietrich College Senior Honors Thesis sequence 66-501/66-502. The course is open only to students who have been approved for entry into the Dietrich College Senior Honors Program, and whose senior honors thesis project has been approved as a one-semester undertaking. Thesis topics are selected by faculty and students, and reviewed and approved through the senior honors program application process. The thesis culminates in an original independent research or creative project. Dietrich College senior honors students are also required to participate in the annual Meeting of the Minds Undergraduate Research Symposium, offering either an oral presentation or poster session based on their senior honors thesis.

66-504 Senior Capstone I
All Semesters: 9 units
TBA

66-505 Senior Capstone II
All Semesters: 9 units
TBA

66-506 Senior Capstone
All Semesters
TBA

General Dietrich College Courses

65-201 Humanities Scholars III
Fall: 9 units
Humanities Scholars Program III: Poetry and Power (Fall 2019) Audre Lorde wrote, "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence." Poetry is often perceived as an elite art, practiced within the confines of academia and understood only by a chosen few. But poetry is grounded historically in an oral tradition and a sense of public ownership. Does poetry have power in our society? What is its social function? How is poetry distinct from other modes of writing and art? Can poetry advance social movements and connect people with perspectives beyond their comfort zones? This course will consider arguments about poetry and its relationship with society. Students will read and discuss poetry both on and off the page, as well as explore arguments about poetry, poetics, and power via essays, literature, performance, media, and community engagement.
Prerequisite: 65-102
Course Website: http://www.hss.cmu.edu/hfsp/

65-203 Applied Quantitative Social Science II
Spring: 9 units
Applied Quantitative Social Science II is the second course in the QSSS core sequence. Conducted in a seminar format, the course will feature guest lectures from a series of faculty at CMU. Students will discuss ongoing research across the social sciences, and over the course of the semester will develop a research project proposal. Seminar participation is limited to QSSS students.