

Spring 2027: University Honors Program UHON 351 Seminars

- One of the perks of being an Honors student is that you get to register early for classes.
- Students must meet with their Honors mentor at least once prior to reserving or registering for an Honors seminar.
- To learn more about the seminars, meet the faculty teaching these seminars at the **Honors Faculty Roundtable, Monday, October 19th from 4-5:30 pm in the Honors Lounge.**
- To register for an Honors seminar, you must **reserve** a spot or join the waitlist during the **October 20th – 23rd online reservation process.** Be on the lookout for details in the 411.
- **Early registration for all classes is on October 26th from 8:15 am-6:00 pm.** Registration must be completed using Saluki-Net.

The Honors cluster theme (marked in RED) this year is:
Southern Illinois Legacy Builders-embracing our history and legacy as we move into the future.

UHON 111

001	Honors Colloquium	MW 3:30-4:45	Morris 112	Donoghue
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351F- Fine Arts

001	Sex, Crimes, and the Sublime on the Musical Stage	MWF 9-9:50	Morris 610A	Eads
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351L- Human Health

001	Health Communication	MW 10-11:15	Morris 112	Karan
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351M-Multicultural

001	Observing American Religious Diversity in Southern Illinois	MW 2-3:15	Morris 112	Grant
002	Socrates & the Buddha	TR 2-3:15	Morris 610A	Starnaman & Johnson
004	Sex, Crimes, and the Sublime on the Musical Stage	MWF 9-9:50	Morris 610A	Eads

351O-Social Science

001	Observing American Religious Diversity in Southern Illinois	MW 2-3:15	Morris 112	Grant
002	Pyrogeography: History of Fire on Earth	TR 5-6:15	Morris 610A	Ruffner
003	Southern Illinois Resources for Space Exploration	TR 3:35-4:50	Morris 610A	Lefticariu
004	Health Communication	MW 10-11:15	Morris 112	Karan
005	How Humans Learn: An Introduction to the Science of Learning	TR 12:30-1:45	Morris 610A	Martin
006	Generative AI: Concepts, Applications & Inquiry	MW 12-1:15	Engineering 410	Hossain

351S1-Science 1 (Physical)

001	Pyrogeography: History of Fire on Earth	TR 5-6:15	Morris 610A	Ruffner
002	Endless Forms & Imperfect Simulations: A Gamified Introduction to Historical Biogeography	T 10-10:50 R 9-10:50	Morris 112	Brown
003	Southern Illinois Resources for Space Exploration	TR 3:35-4:50	Morris 610A	Lefticariu
004	Generative AI: Concepts, Applications & Inquiry	MW 12-1:15	Engineering 410	Hossain

351S2-Science 2 (Life)

001	Pyrogeography: History of Fire on Earth	TR 5-6:15	Morris 610A	Ruffner
002	Endless Forms & Imperfect Simulations: A Gamified Introduction to Historical Biogeography	T 10-10:50 R 9-10:50	Morris 112	Brown

351U-Humanities

001	Observing American Religious Diversity in Southern Illinois	MW 2-3:15	Morris 112	Grant
002	Socrates & the Buddha	TR 2-3:15	Morris 610A	Starnaman & Johnson
003	Pyrogeography: History of Fire on Earth	TR 5-6:15	Morris 610A	Ruffner
004	Southern Illinois Resources for Space Exploration	TR 3:35-4:50	Morris 610A	Lefticariu
005	How Humans Learn: An Introduction to the Science of Learning	TR 12:30-1:45	Morris 610A	Martin
006	Generative AI: Concepts, Applications & Inquiry	MW 12-1:15	Engineering 410	Hossain
008	Sex, Crimes, and the Sublime on the Musical Stage	MWF 9-9:50	Morris 610A	Eads

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Endless Forms and Imperfect Simulations: A Gamified Introduction to Historical Biogeography - NEW

This course introduces, and then exams, the mechanisms that drive the evolution and maintenance of biodiversity through the dynamic history of the earth. To do this, the course covers Earth's long history of 'endless forms' of life - from simple single-celled organisms to plants, insects, dinosaurs, and eventually the rise of modern mammals and humans. The course also introduces and applies core ecological and evolutionary concepts to the key geological, atmosphere, and climatic changes on Earth. The class format will include a discussion of primary literature and chapters from a popular science book, coupled with hands-on exercises (in the form of analog simulations using strategic board games). Students will improve quantitative reasoning by reflecting on each board game as a biological simulation in the context of key learning objectives and by adapting a board game to better emulate a key ecological or evolutionary process.

David McCullough once said, "History is who we are and why we are the way we are." McCullough said this in context of American history; however, it can be extended to our deepest history. I firmly believe that understanding the history of the earth gives important perspective on what it means to be human and how precious earth's species and ecosystems are. Further, learning about earth's history provides context for modern extinctions and modern climate and environmental changes. I also believe that this course is broadly useful to all academic majors, as science fluency and strong quantitative reasoning are vital skills to all professionals and – at large - informed citizens.

- **Jason L. Brown, Associate Professor, School of Biological Sciences, CALPS**
(Fulfills: Science 1 or Science 2)

Sex, Crimes, and the Sublime on the Musical Stage - NEW

Designed for music-majors and non-majors alike, students will develop knowledge of repertoire from the musical stage, from Carousel to Hamilton and Mozart to Jake Heggie. Answers to questions such as Why are we drawn to stories of betrayal, violence, and redemption? Can art make us sympathize with people whose choices we would condemn in real life? How have changing ideas about sex, gender, race and power shaped entertainment through the years? Along with watching and listening to selections from these shows, students will analyze from a social and cultural perspective and reflect on the overt and covert social and cultural implications that underpin these great and impacting works of dramatic art.

- **Emerson Eads, Assistant Professor, School of Music, CAM**
(Fulfills: Fine Arts, Multicultural or Humanities)

Observing American Religious Diversity in Southern Illinois - NEW

This course explores religious diversity in America by studying the faith communities in our own backyard. Students will observe five different religious congregations in Southern Illinois—from mainline Protestant and evangelical churches to historically Black denominations, Catholic parishes, and minority religious traditions. Students will connect what they witness firsthand to larger patterns in American religious history and sociology.

Religion is a topic that we should all understand. Religion remains a powerful force shaping American culture, politics, and identity, yet many Americans have little understanding of faiths outside their own tradition. This course will help you understand other traditions and give you first-hand experience with the diversity of religion in America. By combining scholarly analysis with direct observation, students gain both intellectual frameworks and practical experience for navigating one of the most significant dimensions of human culture. Students leave the course not just knowing about different religions, but having witnessed how real people live their faith in communities across Southern Illinois.

- **J. Tobin Grant, Professor, School of Anthropology, Political Science & Sociology, COLA**
(Fulfills: Multicultural, Social Science or Humanities)

Generative AI: Concepts, Applications, and Inquiry - NEW

This course is an interdisciplinary, discussion-based seminar that invites students from all majors to examine how generative AI—such as large language models and agentic AI—is reshaping what we know, how we create, and who we are. Rather than focusing on technical concept only, the course explores major questions raised by these technologies: What is intelligence, and can machines truly “think”? How do AI systems influence learning, communication, and decision-making? What becomes of creativity, authorship, and meaning when machines generate language and art? How might AI alter power, work, and human identity? Through collaborative dialogue, close reading, and guided experimentation, students investigate the promises and challenges of AI across education, science, art, media, and society. This course matters because AI is rapidly transforming daily life and society; by engaging conceptual understanding alongside real-world applications, students gain the insight and agency needed to navigate an AI-assisted future with curiosity, responsibility, and confidence. No technical background required.

- **Md Belayat Hossain, Assistant Professor, School of Computing, CECTM**
(Fulfills: Social Science, Science 1 or Humanities)

Health Communication

In a world where health is a critical issue confronting humanity, the need to increase health literacy to promote healthy lifestyles is urgent. This seminar introduces students to issues related to health, such as risks, behaviors, and global and local large-scale threats that have come to the fore in recent history. Every week, we will discuss a significant health issue of concern, such as exercise and nutrition, healthy lifestyle, child health and wellness, obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption, women’s health, spirituality, mental health and others. We will analyze the social, economic, political and cultural issues that impact health practices. We will take up case studies from across the globe to assess the communication strategies and campaigns used to promote better lifestyles, control and prevent social and communicable diseases. Students will learn how AI, new media, and mobile technologies are influencing and impacting health information and health practices. The students will learn how to plan a health communication campaign to create awareness on a health issue of their choice. The aim of the seminar is also to create excitement among students about good health, and for improving their own health practices.

- **Kavita Karan, Professor, School of Journalism and Advertising, CAM**
(Fulfills: Human Health or Social Science)

Southern Illinois Resources for Space Exploration - NEW

The “Southern Illinois Resources for Space Exploration” is a seminar course in which students will learn about the human and natural resources available in Southern Illinois that can sustain space exploration and expand human presence throughout the solar system. The theme discussed will include the resources (water, minerals, and solar energy) and advanced technologies (spacecraft, life support systems, and communication networks) needed for space exploration as well as the professional experts required to utilize them. This course also provides a general overview of the origin of the Solar System, the composition of the planets and moons of the Solar System, and the variety of extraterrestrial objects that could become a major source of natural resources. The students will discuss the latest technologies to be employed for the colonization of the Moon and Mars, including extraterrestrial water and mineral mining, soil augmentation and food production, and technologies for solar and other energy sources necessary for a successful Moon or Mars colony. Additional discussion will include the legal aspects associated with space exploration. This course will cover a broad range of subjects and will stimulate intellectual excitement, curiosity, and independent thinking for undergraduate students. The 21st Century is the Century of Space Exploration and colonization of new planets! Students will learn all about it! This is a rigorous academic class in which students develop both theoretical and practical skills, such as critical thinking and practical application, which will further help them in their work and personal lives.

- **Liliana Lefticariu, Professor, School of Earth Systems & Sustainability, CALPS**
(Fulfills: Social Science, Science 1 or Humanities)

How Humans Learn: An Introduction to the Science of Learning

All students come to the classroom with specific ideas and preconceptions about teaching, learning, and studying, and with existing learning and study habits. However, rarely do students’ ideas and habits align with what research shows us is most effective for developing new knowledge and skills. This class will introduce the “science of learning”, a field of research based in cognitive science that investigates how humans learn and applies such research findings to real educational contexts. Content will highlight the history of institutions such as SIU, founded as a “normal school”, and research on the science of learning done at SIU and by SIU researchers. Students will leave this course with a foundational understanding of the cognitive and social dimensions of learning and teaching as well as best practices for learning, teaching, and studying. Students will also have accurate knowledge regarding common myths about learning and will leave class with practical strategies that they can apply to improving their own learning. Students will also gain experience with reading and analyzing the primary research (journal articles) in the science of learning and communicating science to a broader, non-expert audience.

- **Katherine Martin, Associate Professor, School of Languages & Linguistics, COLA**
(Fulfills: Social Science or Humanities)

Pyrogeography: History of Fire on Earth

Pyrogeography is the study of the history of fire on planet Earth, integrating plant and animal evolution, global ecologies, and human-social developments through time, leading into modern issues of climate change and loss of biodiversity across landscapes. Students will be exposed to the extremely long history of fire here on Earth that has shaped many ecosystems as well as fostered our own human development and evolution through reading current literature and discussing modern issues of fire through mixed media presentations and videos.

- **Charles Ruffner, Professor of Forestry & Director, University Honors Program**
(Fulfills: Social Science, Science 1, Science 2 or Humanities)

Socrates & the Buddha - NEW

Socrates, the Athenian philosopher, and Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, lived more or less at the same time, the 5th century BCE. And each had a huge impact: Socrates is credited with making Western philosophy what it is today, and the Buddha with founding Buddhism, one of the world's great religious and philosophical traditions. Both were remarkable for challenging their societies' traditional answers to a most important question: How should we live? Socrates sought the answer in rational dialogue about what makes for a good person, and a good life; the Buddha found an answer in a deep understanding of the nature of reality grounded, ultimately, in insight that arises in meditation. Socrates is readily pigeon-holed as a Western rationalist, the Buddha as an Eastern mystic. Socrates famously denied having answers, while the Buddha claimed to have rediscovered the ultimate truth. But both prized dialogue and argument, and both wanted their followers to accept their views only if they could confirm them themselves. Both raise fundamental questions about who and what we really are, and how we should live our lives. We propose to study a series of Socratic and Buddhist texts and discuss how they differ and agree, and what they have to say to us today.

- **Sabrina Starnaman, Assistant Professor of Practice, School of History & Philosophy, COLA**
- **David Johnson, Professor, School of Languages & Linguistics, COLA**
(Fulfills: Multicultural or Humanities)

The Honors Colloquium

***Participation is highly selective and requires an application essay.**

Learn about the world of opportunities that may support and enrich an undergraduate or graduate education. This course is an introduction to the process of applying for major scholarships; to the elements of writing style for major scholarship applications; and to other aspects typical of scholarships, graduate, and professional school applications. This class will guide you through this process of self-reflection as you craft essays, develop interview skills and discover research opportunities.

-**Elizabeth Donoghue, Assistant Director, University Honors Program**
Email Elizabeth.donoghue@siu.edu or stop by her office at Morris 184D

ENGL 120H: Archives of Accretion: Composition as Making

Words matter. This seminar takes up the word *accretion* and delves into its multiple meanings and possibilities. At a very basic level, accretion refers to the accumulating pull of matter into a center by which some galaxies are formed. In many ways, we are all accreting our everyday experiences into memories that form our personal archives. And, these personal archives form the web of relationships we are part of. In this course, we'll consider our own personal archives to craft new worlds and futures through writing and making across media. We'll strengthen our critical impulses through deep listening and research. We'll practice navigating the current era's cataclysms and apocalypses – terms whose roots suggest both a washing down (as flood) and a disclosing (as revelation) both personal and public – through our academic, critical, and creative pursuits. We will pursue and make knowledge together, we'll consider how we can communicate and compose, and we'll develop our own writing across a range of technologies, from analog to digital. We will reflect on how writing alone and together can help us understand our place within the natural and changing worlds while tending to and nurturing the imaginative possibilities of the futures we might dream into being.

- **Corinne Dekkers, Assistant Professor of Practice, School of Literature, Writing, & Digital Humanities, COLA**
(Fulfills: BOTH English 101 & 102)

Class Meeting Time: T/R 9-10:45 am *or* T/R 2-3:15pm