# THE ROBERT E. COOK HONORS COLLEGE Honors College Core 101, Fall 2012

Welcome to your first course as an honors student. You have chosen to be a member of the Robert E. Cook Honors College, and your choice indicates to us that you are serious and highly motivated as you enter this course. We expect that you will be willing to commit the time and mental energy to do your very best on each assignment, and we expect that you will attend class regularly and participate eagerly. For our part, we will do everything we can to challenge you and to help you succeed.

This course introduces you to major works of literature and art; to major ideas in history, philosophy, literature and the fine arts as well as to critical-thinking skills used in reading, writing, and discussion in an interdisciplinary, synthetic, and interactive pedagogical environment.

### Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- 1. Think critically, demonstrating mastery application of concepts from *Asking the Right Questions*.
- 2. Develop higher order reasoning skills by synthesizing ideas from several points of view.
- 3. Develop oral and written communication skills that cross the normal boundaries between disciplines.
- 4. Function effectively as a working member of a learning community applying conflict/resolution model.
- 5. Participate effectively in active learning.

#### Core Faculty for Fall 2012:

Dr. Jason Chimonides, Fine Arts Dr.Eric Rubenstein, Philosophy Dr. Caleb Finegan, History Dr.Gail Berlin, English Dr. Michael T. Williamson, English

## Course Organization:

This course is organized around 2 of the 6 interdisciplinary core questions of the Robert E. Cook Honors College. The two questions for this semester are "What Do We Know/What Do We Believe?" and "How Do We Tell the Good from the Bad." Each question or unit will take about half of the semester. All six of the core questions have the following corollary question attached to them: "What, therefore, Should I Do?" We add this because knowledge cannot be held at arm's length. When we learn new things, we are affected, and we need to think how this changes, or should change, our behavior and our obligations to each other.

At the beginning of each unit, we meet as a community in the Great Hall where we introduce the question and discuss common readings and issues. After the

introduction, we divide into discipline-specific groups of no more than 20 students, meeting in the five small classrooms. Each of these groups works with one of the professors for the rest of the unit. At the end of the unit we reassemble in the Great Hall, and the students in each of the groups gives a presentation to teach the students of the other four groups what they have learned. During the second half of the semester, we repeat the cycle for the second question. The attached calendar will help you understand how this works.

All the professors teach about the same core question, but each will approach it differently depending on the nature of that discipline and the examples the professor chooses. At orientation, you will receive brief descriptions of what professors have planned for this semester. You may indicate your preferences for which group you want to be in by turning in the form distributed in with your name and top three (3) ranked picks for each unit. We cannot guarantee that all of you will get your first choices, but we will do our best.

Over the course of four semesters (HNRC101, HNRC102, and HNRC201), you are required to take two units in English (if at all possible from different faculty members), and one unit each in History, Fine Arts, and Philosophy. This will leave one unit as a free choice for you to repeat a discipline; in addition, as sophomores you will take "science core" – more on that later.

#### **BOOKS YOU NEED TO PURCHASE:**

Neil Browne's Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking. 9th edition

Other book(s) will be necessary for discipline-specific choices. Your unit instructors will advise you of the book(s) needed for specific units. Wait until you have met with or received a syllabus from your unit professors to buy such book(s); also, save your receipts in the event you need to return any book(s).

You will also need to reserve some funds for attendance of fine arts events. This is part of the course too.

## **Common Readings & Film (Unit A):**

- 1. Neil Browne"s Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking (Chs. 1-7)
- 2. Plato"s "Allegory of the Cave"
- 3. W.K. Clifford's "The Ethics of Belief": http://myweb.lmu.edu/tshanahan/Clifford-

#### Ethics\_of\_Belief.html

4. New York Times

#### **Common Readings (Unit B):**

1. M. Neil Browne & Stuart M. Keeley, eds., Asking the Right Questions (Chapters 8-to end)

2. James Rachels' essay "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism": http://www.nd.edu/~bgoehrin/literature/Rachels.html
3. New York Times

#### THE ROLE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN THE HONORS CORE:

We are very fortunate to have copies of the weekday *New York Times* (Monday through Friday) available in Whitmyre Hall, and this splendid resource, one of the world's great newspapers, is part of the common reading for both units. This is an excellent opportunity to connect what we are thinking in class with current events, to exercise our critical-thinking skills, and to ponder the implications of learning's consequential question: "What, therefore, should I do?" Your unit professor will give you specific instructions for any *New York Times* writing assignments and indicate when they are to be submitted.

#### THE ROLE OF FINE ARTS IN THE HONORS CORE:

One of the great joys of living in a university community is that the fine arts are available in abundance. As witness to this, many people choose a university town as the location for their businesses or professional practices or even as their retirement homes because they relish the opportunity to enjoy the arts.

Here at IUP, we are blessed with strong and active departments in art, music, and theater. In addition to excellent campus talent, major national and even international performers come to IUP each semester. Unless you eventually end up living in a major city, the lively arts may be more available to you now than they will be at any other time in your life. (This doesn't even consider the fact that city ticket prices can easily be ten times those on campus.)

We know that many of you would immerse yourselves in IUP's cultural life without any encouragement at all from the faculty. But we also know how easy it is to become so engrossed in their individual scholarly pursuits that they do nothing else, and the arts get lost amid the hectic pace of life. When this happens, it is quite simply tragic. An irreplaceable opportunity for growth and enjoyment is lost.

Because we know that some of you will underestimate how important the arts are for your lives, and because others will, despite good intentions, think themselves too busy, Honors Core includes some intentional pressure for attendance.

# \*Fine Arts Requirement (part of your Daily Participation Grade)

To satisfy the Fine Arts requirement for this unit, each student must attend at least six cultural events in the fall 2012. Each professor has the discretion to include writing assignments or to require simple attendance/engagement to satisfy the requirement.

Additionally you are required to attend an opera in Pittsburgh with other HC students for which the HC will arrange bus transportation.

Each of the Fine Arts events counts for 1% of your overall grade (so 7% in total). The due date to complete the Fine Arts requirement is the last day of the semester, so in this case, Monday, December 10, 2012.

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY & PARTICIPATION:

The success of this course depends on your active involvement and participation. You are expected, by your peers and by your professors, to be in class promptly and fully prepared each day. Our concern is not merely for what you miss by absences or lack of preparation, but also for what the rest of us miss as a consequence. We are a community of learners whose minds are expanded by contact with others" thoughts. When you are absent, or passively silent, the community suffers, and we are the poorer for having been deprived of your knowledge, wit, and wisdom.

Because all honors-core faculty take seriously the importance of your committed involvement, we have set a policy that more than one unexcused absence per unit will result in an F grade for this course, (and consequently in your dismissal from the Honors College). An excused absence is a verifiable illness, emergency, or participation in an official university activity, as defined in the IUP Handbook; authority to grant excused absences resides with your professor. It is your obligation to present your excuse for an absence to professors as soon as possible after your return and to arrange to make up work. Since much of the core class is based on class participation and group efforts, more than a few excused absences will have an impact on your learning experience. Sometimes extended illnesses are dealt with best by a medical withdrawal from the course. Two instances of tardiness count as one absence.

#### **GRADING POLICY:**

All grading is done by your disciplinary sub-group professors. Your final course grade is an average of the grades you receive from your two professors.

45% Thesis Paper, at least five typed pages, one for each core question. These papers will go through a peer-editing process and at least one revision before being submitted for your professor"s evaluation. Because this revision process involves group work, we do not accept late papers. Deadlines are listed in your schedule. If the paper is late, you have a zero for the editing work involved, and you will miss out on any subsequent revision opportunities for that paper.

10% Peer-editing grade.

45% Daily Participation. This includes informed, active class participation; group presentations; journal entries; fine arts events (7%), and other assignments as indicated by your unit professors. Your unit professor will tell you how much weight is given to each of these items.

GRADING SCALE: 90-100 A, 80-89 B, 70-79 C, 60-69 D, 0-59 F

We wish you an intellectually exciting semester.

# This syllabus is subject to change within the dictates of university policy.

Please see the following appendices to the syllabus at <a href="www.iup.edu/honors">www.iup.edu/honors</a> Go to the "current students" section and look under "curricular" for:

HNRC 101 Calendar Fall 2012

Core faculty profiles

Living/learning in Whitmyre: Building Rules

Writing a Thesis Paper Classroom Discussion End-of-Unit Presentations Editing Music Critiques

Visual Arts Critiques Theater Critiques

Fine Arts Smorgasbord Fall 2012