

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

All LAS 1 & 2 Courses – Fall 2015

Liberal Arts & Sciences 1 – The Natural Environment

HS 1990

The Ends of the World (As We Know It)

This course will explore how American culture sometimes labels various events or processes as cataclysm or apocalypse. First, we will examine how chattel slavery combined with cotton culture to change the landscape of America, culminating in the cataclysmic American Civil War. Next we will explore the role of natural disaster and end-of-the-world scenarios in popular culture and ask how this might affect how we deal with the reality of climate change or nuclear holocaust. Finally, we will consider how our political culture has come to grips with the possibility of the apocalyptic predictions of climate change in the near future.

LAS 1110

Finding Your Voice, Changing the World

Finding your voice is not a singular achievement; it is a metaphor for the process of self-development and for expressing what we, as whole human beings, are called to do at differing times in our lives. This course explores voice and development, and thus what it means to be human, in relation to making contributions to others. A particular emphasis is placed on the role of education in finding our voices and changing the world.

LAS 1110

Getting Away From it all: Human Voices Respond to the Wilderness

This course examines the human language applied to the wilderness experience as both metaphor and as an instrument of intentional moral engagement that roots us to being human. Exploring various historical and cross-cultural metaphors of wilderness as a starting point, we will move to an examination of contemporary writers who speak to the value of the “self” found in the wholeness of human solitude. Students will be asked to explore and reflect on their role in the natural community in order to examine the ways in which the concept of “wilderness” illuminates the value of human wholeness

LAS 1110

Is Capitalism Good for the Environment?

Markets are powerful. They constantly shape our modern world, and the greed of rampant capitalism carries the blame for some of the planet’s worst environmental disasters. But can capitalism play a different role in society? Can capitalism have a conscience? This course examines that very question by exploring environmental reform through the lens of market-based initiatives. Students will review organizational models that promote the double bottom line of profitability and environmental sustainability, with special attention being paid to the tensions these twin missions create. Ultimately, students will decide if markets can be successfully redirected, answering this all-important question: “Can the invisible hand of the market have a green thumb?”

LAS 1110

The Nature Principle

One of the most pressing challenges we face today is our relationship to the natural world.

With more and more of our time spent in technologically mediated environments, our time in nature is seen primarily as recreational. As a result, our attentiveness to the land as a living community, and understanding our place within it, seems to be increasingly beyond our view. Using a multi-disciplinary approach this class will engage readings, documentaries, and the land itself, to better understand what it means to see ourselves as being *of nature*, not just in it. In doing so, we will consider whether the idea that becoming one with our machines/technologies is just another step in our evolutionary process, one that will allow us to completely transcend our very biology, placing us *beyond nature* in some way. We will begin, however, with a very different view. Richard Louv, author of *The Nature Principle*, believes that: “*The more high-tech we become, the more we need Nature.*” First question – What could he possibly mean?

LAS 1110

The Forest through the Trees

The students in this class will learn to become more attentive to the natural world through an examination of forests, particularly the New England forest. We will explore how humans have interacted with this forested community over the course of history and how, through a multidisciplinary approach, the forest has shaped history, human creative endeavors such as literature and art, and philosophies of nature. Students will learn how to read the forested landscape and the science of the local forest, its inhabitants and the natural processes that shape this community. We will also explore and question our own connections to the forest, how society utilizes this community and the importance of natural areas for humankind.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

All LAS 1 & 2 Courses – Fall 2015

Liberal Arts & Sciences 2 – Democratic Values

LAS 1120

Democratic Values in a Digitally Connected World

This course is an exploration and an interdisciplinary account of human rights as universal rights and the ways in which developing technologies can and have facilitated action, helping to reveal the inhumane and unfair practices of cultures, dictators, terrorists and their supports, worldwide. Beginning with the principles of democratic values as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the content of this course will examine the role of communication technologies in relation to the principle of free and open sharing of information, necessary for a fully functioning democratic society. Discussions will include how social media has changed how people convey ideas of religious, social, and political freedom, can help to mobilize resistance to shared injustices worldwide, and on-going attempts to control and limit a people's basic and fundamental right to know.

LAS 1120

Evolution of the American Democracy

This course will provide an analysis of American history from the perspectives of political thought & process, as well as the concurrent developments in economics and culture. The course begins amidst the turmoil of the early modern Scientific Revolution and the Protestant Reformation and traces the development of the sovereignty of the people from 16th century Europe to the controversial election of 2000.

LAS 1120

US Legal Systems

This course provides an introduction to the American Legal System, including its history, philosophy, and practices. Students will consider the structure and function of the legal system, several substantive areas of the law (e.g. torts and contract law), and the dynamic relationship between law and social policy

LAS 1120

US Politics

This course examines the basic concepts involved in the study of politics. The four classic areas of Political Science are stressed: International Relations, US Politics, Comparative Government, and Political Theory and Methodology. Topics include nature of the state, purpose of government, justice, and the definition and use of power.

LAS 1120

US Social Problems

The U.S. faces many challenging social problems, including crime, violence, unemployment, poverty, greed and discrimination. In this course, we will be studying some of these problems and their root causes and consequences. We will also examine some of the efforts/suggestions to address these problems.

LAS 1120

The New South

This course is about the history, politics, culture and economics of the New South. From its early settlement, growing out of the ashes of the Civil War, the new south has evolved from poverty and institutionalized White supremacy through the end of World War II to a civil rights movement which has changed the South forever. Students in The New South will study the cultural, religious, and political differences among and between Southerners. The struggles of the many civil rights movements will be seen through the eyes of diverse communities in the region. The course will use the founders' promise of American democracy as a background for the evolution of Southern states, communities and people. Finally, we will place the Southern experience in a broader context through the prism of a more global democratic aspiration articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

SW 1110

Introduction to Social Work

Social workers aim to improve the quality of life for people; from individuals, to families, to communities, through a variety of methods. This course affords students the opportunity to develop an understanding of the social work profession. In this course the many facets of social work - theory, methods, and fields of practice - will be examined.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

All LAS 1 & 2 Courses – Fall 2015

OTHER COURSES YOU WILL LIKELY BE TAKING AS A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

LAS 1000

Bridges to Learning (First-Year Seminar)

This two-credit course will introduce you to academic and student life at NEC and encourage you to become an intentional, curious and engaged learner and member of our community. Building on your strengths, you will develop the skills you need to achieve personal and academic growth and success. You will also explore what it means to live and learn in the context of our rich liberal arts environment.

WR 1010

Composition

Composition is an evidence-based, writing intensive course designed to improve critical thinking, reading, and writing proficiencies through guidance in a variety of academic formats. Students will develop strategies for turning their experience, observations, and analyses into evidence suitable for academic writing. Over the course of the semester, students will build upon their critical thinking skills to learn the processes necessary for gathering and incorporating research material in their writing. With an emphasis on civics and the natural environment, students will learn how to evaluate, cite, and document primary and secondary research sources, as well as how to develop arguments and support them with sound evidence.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR STUDENTS IN THE **LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

(You will be registered for either of these two courses, or WR 1010, based on your room assignment. It will be your designated LLC course for the semester)

LAS 1120

Human Rights on the World Stage

The struggle for human dignity, justice and freedom is universal and timeless. It recognizes neither cultural nor historical boundaries. The history of theatre and film is filled with the work of artists who have persistently and forcefully rebelled against tyranny, oppression and exploitation of all kinds. More importantly, however, is that plays and films movingly humanize the conflicts that they depict. Ultimately plays and films are not about “issues;” they are about human beings. Further, no matter what may separate these works from each other, they all attempt to shed light on the same basic question: what does it mean to be human? A range of plays and films will be read, screened and discussed that offer unique and compelling insights into these and other issues.

LAS 1120

The Humanity of the Inhumane

“Hitler was human.” “Our laws call for us to kill people for killing people.” “It is not only just, but even merciful to eat the children of the poor.” These are the type of statements we will find ourselves pondering as part of this course. Over the semester, students will examine how inhumane acts, ideas, and people represent an essential piece of our shared humanity. We will attempt to identify and define characteristics of inhumanity and in doing so come to recognize how these characteristics play a significant role in the way we, as humans, look at and experience the world. In this context we will read and examine Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange*, Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, as well as other shorter works. This course is not a black and white examination of insane, horrific, and immoral things; it is an examination of how our interest in and connection with the insane, horrific, and immoral stems from what we share as humans. After completing this course students should be able to understand how the lure *and* repulsion of the inhumane are at the heart of what connects Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* (written in 1729) to a modern-day issue of *The Onion*. That’s just one example. Over the course of the semester students will be presented with a multitude of additional examples, each offering widely different insights into why humans are, above most everything else, inherently fascinated with and incredibly adamant about what we should and should not do, think and be.