

2023 Summer Honors Institute – Course Descriptions

Honors Core Course

Every student participates in the Core Course each day.

Kathy Clarke (JMU Libraries) and Dr. Paul Mabrey (Assistant Professor in the School of Communication Studies and Director for Student Success & Enrollment Analytics)

Civic Purpose & Legacy - Do legacies end? Should you have a purpose bigger than you? Students in this class will explore the value of legacy before closely analyzing and debating a specific case of civic legacy in Loudon County, Virginia. Students will review primary documents that guide the work of a Loudon County non-profit organization, considering questions about the benefactor's intent, societal changes, and even difficult truths about their lives coming to light.

Subject Area Courses

Offered twice each day during the week for 90 minutes each. Students choose a selection of classes that fit their interests and goals.

Dr. Martin Cohen (Political Science)

Religion and Politics: The Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses - They say religion and politics are two things you don't discuss in polite company. Well, I teach a whole class on them. Today we will explore the two subjects through a combination of lecture, group discussion, and group presentations. Our focus today will be on the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause in the United States Constitution. Some of the most controversial Supreme Court cases in recent memory have found the justices attempting to navigate this legal minefield.

Dr. Ángel Garcia (Geology and Environmental Science)

How are Humans Becoming a Geologic Force? - During this short course we are going to be discussing the human contribution to important systems in our planet such as: the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. This course is designed to provide you with a comprehensive introduction to the debated topic of the Anthropocene (as a theoretical framework) and the introduction as a geological time unit. Topics include the origin of the scientific debate, humans within the scale of geologic time, human influence of geological processes, and climate change, among others.

Dr. Vesna Hart (Center for Global Engagement)

Engaging Across Difference - Get to know your peers through stories and ethical considerations! We will engage in reflection and storytelling about how personal experiences and cultural identities shape how we perceive and engage with ourselves, others, and the world. Storytelling will be used to reflect on ethical considerations in everyday life. In addition to storytelling, we will engage in critical reflection and dialogue.

Mr. Michael McCleve (Student Leadership Center)

Leaders Lead, Don't They? - Quick, define leadership. Seems simple enough, right? After all, leaders lead, don't they? In this class session you will both explore and be exposed to concepts and definitions of leadership that may not have ever crossed your mind before. Through interactive learning activities, dialogue, and discussion we will wrestle together with the fundamentals of what is required to change others' lives and change the communities they live in.

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Dr. Andre Neveu (Economics)

Money, Debt, and Higher Education - Debt plays an important role in our modern economy. Have you ever wondered how money came about or what it means? Is our government on the edge of bankruptcy? Does one always have to repay their debts? We will explore these questions and more in this short-form course designed to introduce you to the concepts of money, banking, and credit. These ideas will be applied to a short advocacy exercise related to higher education, tuition, and student loan debt. While you can probably see how money and debt play an obvious and important role in economics and finance, they also play a key role in the study of politics, psychology, literature, and art. We invite you to come learn a little about how money and finance affect your world.

Dr. Chris Johnson (Computer Science)

Cutting with Code - Writing code to flip bits can be fun, but have you tried writing code to flip atoms? In this workshop, you'll use ideas from computer science, mathematics, and art to program interesting virtual 2D shapes. Then you'll feed the output to a vinyl cutter. The output is not virtual bits, but a physical sticker that has a life apart from the computer that made it.

Dr. Fawn-Amber Montoya (Honors College & History)

Honoring Dia de los Muertos - Students will engage in dialogue and artistic expression related to the celebration and appreciation of Dia de los Muertos. Students will have the opportunity to view ofrendas, experience cultural practices, and reflect on their own cultural celebrations of their ancestors.

Dr. John Hulsey (Political Science)

Identity vs. Democracy: Competing Visions of the Post-Cold War World - The 20th Century was dominated by ideological contests on a global scale, but how do we understand geopolitics since the end of the Cold War? We'll discuss some of the big ideas and evaluate for ourselves which ideas do the most to explain the most important events of the last 30 years.

Dr. Carlos Aleman (School of Communication Studies)

Decoding Culture in Family Communication: Telling Stories of Trouble - In the animated film, "Encanto," members of the Madrigal family know something about Bruno that nobody is supposed to talk about. The truth is that in most families there are often stories told about the time a family member got into trouble. In this 90-minute learning activity and conversation, we focus on stories told within families about trouble or embarrassing situations to explore how they communicate family values of culture, identity, and role behavior.

Dr. Mark Piper (Philosophy & Religion)

God on the Defensive? - I begin my presentation by noting that religious belief has been becoming less popular, especially in the last few decades. I then consider a variety of philosophical reasons for why this might be the case. I hope that the presentation results in an engaging and robust discussion of the philosophical arguments for and against belief in God.

Dr. Pia Antolic-Piper (Philosophy & Religion)

What's in the word 'feminist'? Philosophy & Feminism - What's in the term 'feminist'? In the word 'woman' or 'identity'? Or 'oppression'? Even though, according to recent polls, many people view 'feminism' as having achieved its goals and some people consider it even as harmful to society, recent controversies about the feminist movement, women's rights over their bodies, or identity, to name just a few, seem to prove otherwise: These public debates suggest that people will do well to come to terms with these controversies and articulate their own positions on these matters – individually, collectively, and ideally in dialogue with other. In this

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subject area class, you will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning activities on feminism and feminist philosophy and learn more about these controversies and some of their philosophical underpinnings.

Dr. Betsy Herron (Nursing)

Is Grey's Anatomy for Real? The Image of Healthcare Providers in the Media - Fictional portrayals of health care in entertainment can influence patients' perceptions. We'll explore pop culture's impact on how patients view and understand health care.

Dr. Daniel Holt (Psychology)

Decision Making 101 - We will explore well-established factors that influence our everyday choice behaviors as they relate to the ideas of self-control and impulsivity. We will end the session with a focus on strategies we can all easily employ to improve our longer-term success in virtually any aspect of life.

Dr. Philip Frana (Independent Scholars)

Demystifying Creativity - Creativity can be learned! This class will show you how to nurture the hidden habits of highly creative people. Along the way, we'll dispel some common myths about creativity, learn about the latest scientific research on the subject, and discuss the limits of standardized tests of creativity and intelligence.

Dr. Christian Early (Philosophy & Religion; Ethical Reasoning in Action)

Ethical Reasoning and the 8KQ Strategy - Everyday life is full of moral situations. In this class, you will learn how to spot moral situations and a strategy for ethical decision-making that is unique to JMU. The class will consider multiple ethical scenarios and participants will develop their skill in ethical reasoning.

Dr. Katherine Ott Walter (Health Sciences)

Sex, Drugs, and Dead Celebrities - This interactive presentation will provide participants with an overview of substance use disorders, their impact of sexual behaviors, and the risks associated with use.