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**Master Syllabus**

**Course: HON 301 Honors Research Across Disciplines**

**Cluster Requirement: 4C**

This University Studies Master Syllabus serves as a guide and standard for all instructors teaching an approved course in the University Studies program. Individual instructors have full academic freedom in teaching their courses, but as a condition of course approval, agree to focus on the outcomes listed below, to cover the identified material, to use these or comparable assignments as part of the course work, and to make available the agreed-upon artifacts for assessment of learning outcomes.

**Course Rationale**

The course prepares Honors students for their Honors research thesis requirement, while requiring them to reflect on their own place in the social/political/natural environment through the lens of their academic discipline applied to the global topic of water security. During the semester students work on a research proposal of their own interests and another discipline-specific study on the global topic of “water security.”

Water security was declared a human right in 2010 by the United Nations. Water security is not simply access to potable water, many factors contribute to water security outside the mere physical realm of water, such as infrastructure, political, social, financial, etc.

The course will play a central role for the Honors curriculum. Given limited faculty resources and the need for students in some disciplines to focus on their majors, many Honors students will graduate without the opportunity to take a specifically Honors course that covers human rights and asks the hard question of our responsibility to geographically distant others and to the biosphere. Honors recognizes that all students are required to take University Studies 4C, but we believe that having the requirement at a 300-level and integrated into the Honors program sends the message that understanding social and ethical responsibility is part of an Honors degree. Obviously, if Honors students take more than one 4C during their academic career, even better.

The course is blended, with a face-to-face meeting once weekly. Class meetings utilize group work and similar active learning practices. The rest of the work is done on online discussion boards. Students respond to prompts and then give feedback on the work of approximately three others. These pedagogical approaches seem to be a good fit to meet the University Studies Cluster 4c learning outcomes, as they are the best way to engage students with grappling with challenging global issues. Shyer students are able to be more “vocal” on discussion boards, while the whole class can learn from each other and the disciplinary perspectives of others.

The global component of the course culminates in a research proposal; however, nearly every week students will have worked on some component of that proposal; for example, research methods or evaluating sources.

Students will meet the learning outcomes for Cluster 4C:

Outcome #1: In 2010, the United Nations recognized that water security is a global human right interconnected with other rights and needs for human and environmental well-being.

Given that HON 301 is a course designed to train students to be researchers, it clearly will fulfill the learning outcome #2 of Cluster 4C: “Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.”

Students will also meet the 3rd outcome – “evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on global society” – through HON 301. The entire course is premised on the evaluation of different arguments and perspectives, specifically those introduced to the course through the students’ own research and work. Students are thus in charge of their own education as they generate the content of the course.

**Course Overview:**

This seminar will prepare you to undertake your Honors project. You will learn what Honors projects look like, how to devise your own project, and how to identify and work with faculty advisors. By the end of the semester, you will have completed the first stage of the Honors project process: the formal submission of an Honors project proposal, approved by a faculty member who has agreed to supervise it. You will also study the interdisciplinary research topic of water security. Working on this topic will allow you to practice your research skills, reflect on your discipline, and work as a team to problem solve, all in a global context. You will come to understand that knowledge creation does not happen in a vacuum, and thus brings with it social, political, ethical consequences and responsibilities.

This is the current COIN description and will be replaced by a properly COIN formulated version of the overview above:

*“This seminar will prepare you to undertake your Honors thesis or project. You should take this seminar no later than the semester BEFORE you plan to begin work on your project. We will explore topics such as creative and critical thinking, project and time management, research ethics, and public presentation. By the end of the semester, you will identify your project supervisor and submit your initial project proposal. If you wish to begin work on your project in spring 2013 - an option that would allow you to have your project in hand by the time graduate school applications and job interviews begin in late 2013 - then you should enroll in Honors 301 now!”*

This is a blended course in which, in addition to meeting for one hour and forty minutes each week, you will be asked to complete weekly online assignments and to provide peer feedback to other students. Students will earn three credits for completing this course.

You are not required to submit an application for an Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) grant, but their deadlines have been changed to make it easier for you to do so.

There are two research components to this course. The first is the proposal for your Honors thesis project. You will be taken through the standard initial steps for starting research, regardless of discipline, such as literature searches. You will see examples of previous student work, some good, others still needing development. You will be given time to meet with potential advisors.

Students in the COE will be given the option of submitting a business proposal instead of a research proposal (strictly speaking). COE Honors students sometimes work on an independent research project and sometimes they do a project that comes out of their senior design project. The decision is based on future goals (for example, graduate school). The skills you learn in this course will be applicable to either choice.

The second research component is a research proposal for a discipline-specific study on the topic of “water security.” The application of your learned research skills is not simply a case of “practice makes perfect”; rather, water insecurity provides a model of how we must synthesize our existing knowledge across disciplines to provide a solution to a global human rights problem. Research does not happen in a vacuum, and we will see how it takes place within a social/political/natural context.

In some cases, students may want to continue with a water security project, either as the Honors thesis project or as a smaller project (independent or connected to another class), although this project needs to be a research study of water security outside the United States (or a comparison of the United States and another region). Your HON 301 instructor can help you identify a supervisor. There *may* also be a small fund to help support research or learning activities related to civic, environmental, and social justice issues.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

Build the capacity to communicate orally and in writing

Develop research skills, both general and relevant for their specific disciplines

Engage with real-world challenges

University Studies Learning Outcomes: **Cluster 4c**

Explain basic problems faced by societies and cultures outside the US or issues that shape societies globally.

Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.

Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on global society

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings:**

The course is primarily student-driven (as it is a research class). Students bring in researched articles, critique the work of others, or post their own researched work online for discussion.

The following are foundational readings. Individual faculty will also add specific readings depending on student interest/disciplines:

Water Security

Week 2: Introduction to the topic of water security.

<http://www.unwater.org/downloads/watersecurity_analyticalbrief.pdf> - introductory summary and chapter 1.

Introduction to the concept of Human Rights.

Nickel, James, "Human Rights", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/rights-human/>\*

Week 3: <http://www.unwater.org/downloads/analytical_brief_oct2013_web.pdf> (read in full)

Week 4: Example: women and water. http://www.ifad.org/gender/thematic/water/gender\_water.pdf

Week 5: Research methods: (1) “Choosing the Appropriate Methodology: Understanding Research Philosophy,” Mary T. Holden and Patrick Lynch.

<http://rikon.ie/images/publications/Choosing_the_Appropriate_Methodology_Understanding_Research_Philosophy_RIKON_Group.pdf> 2-18.

(2) https://home.cc.gatech.edu/cmgardne/uploads/58/Research%20Methods%20and%20Designs.docx.pdf

Week 6: Ethics/Human rights. Sample readings: <http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/54/10/909.full>

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/aug/26/food-shortages-world-vegetarianism>

Week 9: Solutions.

http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v467/n7315/full/nature09440.html

General Research

Week 2: Sample Honors theses on mycourses.

Week 3: Sample Honors research proposals on mycourses.

Week 4: Mentoring. “Five Effective Strategies for Mentoring Undergraduates: Students’ Perspectives.” Mario Pita et al. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly*. Spring 2013, Volume 33, Number 3. 11-14

Week 6: Sample ethics cases. http://ethics.iit.edu/eelibrary/?q=node/2395

[Week 6: For COE students. Chapter 8 (proposals) from *Technical Communication Today*, Richard Johnson-Sheehan. 5th ed. Pearson. 195-228]

Week 8: (1) “Can You Touch Your Toes? Using Tables of Evidence (TOES) to Organize Your Evidence Review. Gina Meyers and Rona F. Levin. *Research and Theory for Nursing Practice: An International Journal*. Vol. 26, No. 4, 2012. 238-240.

(2) Annotated Bibliographies: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/

Week 9: Arguments. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/argument/>\*

Groarke, Leo, "Informal Logic", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/logic-informal/>\*

* Even though these encyclopedias are online, they are peer-reviewed, and – in the case of the Stanford Encyclopedia – the top resource.

**Example Learning Activities and Assignments:**

HON 301 is a shared syllabus to be used by all instructors.

*“Water Security” topic proposal*, 800-1,200 words.

Course artifact to be used for University Studies assessment.

The goal of this piece of work is to capture the students’ thinking not only about the social issue but their reflections on their own discipline. It is a culmination of the online discussion work done throughout the semester (see discussion prompts in sample course outline below) and the students’ individual research work on their specific chosen topic.

How the assignment meets the University Studies Cluster 4c learning outcomes:

Explain basic problems faced by societies and cultures outside the US or issues that shape societies globally.

*“Water security is defined as the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability…Many factors contribute to water security, ranging from biophysical to infrastructural, institutional, political, social and financial – many of which lie outside the water realm. In this respect, water security lies at the centre of many security areas, each of which is intricately linked to water. Addressing this goal therefore requires interdisciplinary collaboration across sectors, communities and political borders.” UN-Water Analytical Brief on Water Security and the Global Water Agenda, 2013*. *Yet it is only as recently as 2010 that The United Nations General Assembly (Resolution A/RES/64/292, July 2010) and the Human Rights Council (Resolution A/HRC/15/L.14, September 2010) recognized the right to access drinking water and sanitation as a human right on the same footing as other social rights such as the right to food and the right to health.*

 Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.

*Hon 301 is a course designed to train students to be researchers. Thus they learn this particular skill-set. For example, students learn to produce annotated bibliographies (which require summaries and evaluation) and Tables of Evidence; and they learn to locate and analyze materials for their online posts and the final assignment.*

Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on global society

*The sub- title of the course is “Research Across the Disciplines.” Yet research does not happen in a social, political, or ethical vacuum. Students learn from the different perspectives produced by the different disciplines of each other. In addition, students explicitly learn to evaluate arguments in week 9. The specific topic of water security is framed within the broader context of a global society, and it allows students to understand how the earth’s inhabitants (and the earth itself) are connected.*

**Sample Course Outline:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week 1 in class | Week 1 DB | Week 1 topic in class | Week 1 topic DB |
| "Ice breaker" Class discussion of research interests 5 minute “free-write” on research interests | X | Initial discussion of disciplinary perspectives on water security topic | X |

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| Week 2 in class | Week 2 DB | Week 2 topic in class | Week 2 topic DB |
| Online discussion groups are formed. Discussion topic: originality. For example, in terms of topic, methods, conclusion/interpretation, presentation, application.  Suggested group work: choose one of the thesis examples and come up with two original project ideas based on the example. | Thesis examples.  Discussion prompts: argument, originality, model. | Instructor will bring more detailed information and examples about water security. Students offer their disciplinary perspectives from DB discussion. | Read introductory readings to the topic of water security on “mycourses.”  Discussion prompt: How could water security be seen as a significant issue for your discipline? |

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| Week 3 in class | Week 3 DB | Week 3 topic in class | Week 3 topic DB |
| Discuss thesis process.  Discuss additions and deletions. Did they improve the final product or not? | Discussion prompt: What was added or deleted from the initial proposal in the final product? | X | Identify 2-3 potential sources of information about water security.  DB Prompt: How could you evaluate the usefulness of the information from these sources? |

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| Week 4 in class | Week 4 DB | Week 4 topic in class | Week 4 topic DB |
| Discussion of responsibilities of mentor and mentee. Discussion of finding a supervisor, specific questions to ask, etc.  How to ask faculty you do not know, etc. | What makes a good mentor? What makes a good mentee?  **Formal decision by COE students as to whether they will do a business proposal or a research proposal. Business proposal reading available on mycourses “Welcome” page** | Discuss water security topics of interest | Research water security topics of specific interest. DB prompt: Post a research question |

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| Week 5 in class | Week 5 DB | Week 5 topic in class | Week 5 topic DB |
| Verbal report of faculty interview | Search online and read work of two faculty. Interview one and report online. Feedback from peers about “fit.”  COE students doing a business proposal will do work on writing this proposal. For ex., summary of proposal contents | Discuss studies | Choose two methods from the site and come up with a possible study on water security for each.  Include the following: research question; description of how the study would look; how could findings be applied? |

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| Week 6 in class | Week 6 DB | Week 6 topic in class | Week 6 topic DB |
| Research ethics discussion Role Playing activity | Research ethics cases | Ethics and water security (research ethics and ethics more generally, for ex., environmental ethics) | Discussion prompt: come up with a possible ethical issue associated with your water security topic |

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| Week 7 in class | Week 7 DB | Week 7 topic in class | Week 7 topic DB |
| 2nd faculty interview or alternative assignment | 2nd faculty interview or alternative assignment | Discuss first draft of topic proposal | Post first draft of topic proposal (approx. 400-500 words) |

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| Week 8 in class | Week 8 DB | Week 8 topic in class | Week 8 topic DB |
| Table of evidence or annotated bibliography |  |  |  |
| Discuss sources:  Summary, evaluation/assessment, reflection for annotated bibliographies or discuss TOEs  Final bib/TOE to be submitted week 13 with SEVEN sources | 5 sources. Peer reviewers will each provide an additional source in TOE or annotated bibliography format | X | X |

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| Week 9 in class | Week 9 DB | Week 9 topic in class | Week 9 topic DB |
| What makes a good/strong argument? | Discussion prompt: what makes a good/strong argument? | In teams consider the strength and weaknesses of the solutions on the DB | Find (most likely in an online search) two solutions that are being offered to the problem of water security. One solution should be in your general disciplinary area and the other should be out of your area. |

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| Week 10 in class | Week 10 DB | Week 10 topic in class | Week 10 topic DB |
| Discuss first draft of research proposal (or business proposal) | Post first draft of research proposal (or business proposal) (approx. 400-500 words) | X | X |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week 11 in class | Week 11 DB | Week 11 topic in class | Week 11 topic DB |
| X | X | Work on draft proposal | Post draft proposal  Prompt questions for peer reviewers:  Does the proposal make use of reference sources?  Is the proposal informational or does it also offer an argument?  Can you see how the author’s disciplinary knowledge allows them to offer a unique perspective on the topic? |

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| Week 12 in class | Week 12 DB | Week 12 topic in class | Week 12 topic DB |
| Discuss draft proposal | Post draft proposal  Peer reviewers: Comment on the following:  Background information  Questions/intellectual motivation for the proposed project  Objectives of the proposed project  Description of the proposed work  Clear statement of the originality of the proposed work  Read your partners’ drafts carefully, and point out any sections that you find unclear, unpersuasive, or impractical. Suggest alternatives. Also try to spot your partners’ spelling and grammar errors—they will see what they meant to write, whereas you will see what they actually wrote. | X | X |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week 13 in class | Week 13 DB | Week 13 topic in class | Week 13 topic DB |
| Presentation of research proposal (or business proposal)  Submit annotated bibliography/TOE (total **7** sources) | X | X | X |

Submission of research/business proposal (including list of sources) and submission of water security topic proposal (including list of sources) at end of semester. Date to be determined by HON 301 instructor.