Honors 201H at the Community Colleges

Dear Community College Honors Students,

The Commonwealth Honors College at UMass Amherst is delighted to be able to offer one of our most popular classes — the small, discussion-based seminar, Honors 201H, “Ideas that Change the World” — at five community colleges in Massachusetts. Thanks to several grants, students at Bunker Hill Community College, Greenfield Community College, Holyoke Community College, Roxbury Community College, and Springfield Technical Community College may take Honors 201H free of charge on their own campus with UMass professors.

Honors 201H is a thought-provoking interdisciplinary seminar that introduces students to a wide range of topics spanning the sciences and humanities that have “changed the world” throughout history and remain of great importance to contemporary life. The course addresses questions of personal and national identity, racial inequality, environmental ethics, dilemmas of technological progress, the power of art, and each individual’s capacity for innovation and creative thinking in the 21st century.

In addition, enrollment in Honors 201H qualifies students for participation in “Du Bois...
Research Day” held at UMass each fall and spring, an invitation-only event for both UMass and community college students. The event includes special lectures by UMass faculty and librarians, tours of Commonwealth Honors College and the W.E.B. Du Bois Library Special Collections & University Archives, catered lunch and dinner, and more.

I hope that you will consider enrolling in Honors 201H and thereby take advantage of this exciting classroom opportunity to join other highly motivated Honors students at your community college for an unforgettable learning experience.

Wishing you all the best in your studies,

Gretchen H. Gerzina
Dean, Commonwealth Honors College
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Course Description

Honors 201H is a small, discussion-based interdisciplinary seminar. As an interdisciplinary seminar, this course illuminates ideas that cross the boundaries of the sciences and the humanities. Course materials draw from a range of influential works that raise issues of enduring importance. Throughout the semester we will examine groundbreaking ideas that have shaped our world, while also inquiring into our own potential for transformative creativity, innovation, and leadership.

Comprised of four units, each unit is organized around 1-2 primary texts/films (listed below), the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, and supplemental readings at the discretion of the instructor (all materials available online).

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), a founder of the Niagara Movement and NAACP, helped usher in the modern civil rights movement. He received his Ph.D. in 1895 from Harvard and is considered a founder of American sociology, contributing early and important works in urban sociology. Du Bois was born in Western Massachusetts, and UMass Amherst’s W.E.B. Du Bois Library holds the permanent collection of his writings and papers. Selected readings will be drawn from the Du Bois Papers in the Digital Collections of the UMass Amherst Libraries Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) (http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/collection/mums312).

- **Unit 1 - Models of Inquiry:** Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- **Unit 2 - Social Thought and Civic Action:** Selected works of W.E.B. Du Bois, which may include *Souls of Black Folk*, and Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Essential Writings*
- **Unit 3 - Revolutionary Changes in Science & Technology:** Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
- **Unit 4 - The Power of the Arts:** Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*

Primary Learning Goals of this Course

The primary learning goals of Honors 201H address
1. Creative, analytical, quantitative, and/or critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving and/or synthesis;
2. Pluralistic perspective-taking and/or awareness of the relationship among culture, self, and other;
3. Understanding and/or evaluating the consequences of one’s choices and the implications of one’s actions; and
4. Communicating persuasively and effectively in writing.

These goals are addressed in many ways over the course of the semester. As you think about your own potential as a student and thinker, you will be doing so in the context of the communities of which you are a part. What is your relationship to your communities? How can influential ideas affect communities positively and detrimentally?

You will also be expected to write effectively. It is challenging, even for seasoned writers, to express complex ideas succinctly and clearly. That is why writing essays is an essential part of Honors 201H. Use each essay and the feedback you receive to improve and refine your style. Ask your peers and your instructor what your strengths and weaknesses as a writer are. In this way, you will emerge from the course with an essential skill that will benefit you throughout your life.

Logistics

How to Apply and Register for Honors 201H (in 5 easy steps):

1. Community College students sign up as Special Students at UMass Amherst and must submit the Special Student form (http://www.umass.edu/registrar/sites/default/files/SpecialStudentApplication.pdf). Students must be authorized by their community college to take this course. While Honors students have priority in registration, others may take the course on a space-available basis.

   [NOTE: Make sure to clearly and correctly list your current email address on the Special Student Form!]

2. Submit your completed Special Student form to your Honors Coordinator as listed below:
   - Bunker Hill Community College: Professor Andre Robinson (aa203149@bhcc.mass.edu)
   - Greenfield Community College: Professor Trevor Kearns (kearnst@gcc.mass.edu)
   - Holyoke Community College: Professor Vanessa Martinez (vmartinez@hcc.edu)
   - Roxbury Community College: Professor John Rollins (jrollins@rcc.mass.edu)
   - Springfield Technical Community College: Professor Diane Sabato (dsabato@stcc.edu)

   All forms will be evaluated by the appropriate Honors Coordinator, and those authorized will be forwarded to UMass Amherst.

3. After the Special Student form has been processed, students will receive an email from UMass IT with important information, including their UMass logon credentials.
4. Once you have received your UMass logon credentials, go to www.umass.edu, then click on the SPIRE link on the top menu bar (the University’s secure online student information system).
5. Log on to SPIRE with your new UMass logon credentials! Once logged on, follow the directions in order to officially register yourself for Honors 201H.

[NOTE: For SPIRE information and help: http://www.umass.edu/it/spire]

SOME LAST IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- If you do not receive the UMass IT email, you will need to call the UMass IT Help Center at 413-545-9400 to arrange for alternate receipt of your credentials.
- Your UMass credentials also give you access to online course content (https://www.umass.edu/it/support/moodle/a-quick-tour-moodle-students) and UMass Library resources (http://www.library.umass.edu/).

Student Comments About Honors 201H

“I loved it. It exposed me to material that I had never seen/read before, but that really helped to expand my understanding of topics I care about. It also allowed me to explore some things that I had been thinking about in more depth and come up with new perspectives.”

“Incredible content. Instructor extremely well versed and knowledgeable. I wish he could do another Honors [course] about Du Bois. I would certainly enroll. It was so enriching I purchased all the readings. Truly miss that class.”

“Eye opening and shocking. Exceptional subject matter.”

“[Honors201H] challenged me and made me grow academically like I haven't since elementary school.”

“This was a great experience as a class. It opened up my eyes to a lot of different and interesting opinions and ideas and even inspired me to alter my field of study for the future and my career aspirations.”

“The class encouraged us to form opinions on topics that are relevant in today’s world.”

“Everything felt very personal and it made it easy to understand and connect.”

“The course material was so interesting and the professor did a wonderful job presenting the coursework and making it feel more like we were discovering subjects rather than memorizing content for a test or paper.”

“I liked the diversity of the subject matter of the course and the different methods of exploring and discussing those topics.”

“I liked that the learning space was very inclusive and comfortable. It allowed for great conversations and the sharing of opposing opinions.”

FAQ
Why should I take this “Ideas” seminar now?

Honors 201H, “Ideas that Change the World”, is a small, discussion-based seminar of usually no more than 15 students, in which you will read about/ discuss some of the most influential ideas in history. Community college students have found Honors 201H to be one of their most exciting and memorable learning experiences. If passed with a B or above, this course will satisfy a foundational honors requirement should you join Commonwealth Honors College. Whether or not you transfer to UMass Amherst, the Ideas seminar can form an interdisciplinary underpinning for lifelong learning.

How much does the course cost?

There is no cost for students authorized by their home community college campus to take this course.

Who are the instructors?

Honors 201H is taught by a group of dedicated, enthusiastic and highly qualified UMass professors with years of experience teaching the course to students in the UMass Commonwealth Honors College.

At Holyoke Community College, one section of the course is also taught by Professor Vanessa Martinez, the Honors Coordinator and Program Coordinator for Sociology/Anthropology.

How much credit does the course carry/what requirements will it satisfy?

Most community colleges award 3 or 4 course credits for Honors 201H upon receiving the UMass transfer transcript. The transcript will be forwarded by UMass Amherst to your community college after course completion and grade submittal.

Although this course has been approved by UMass Amherst as a General Education “Interdisciplinary” course, it may or may not satisfy a course requirement at your home college or another institution you plan to transfer to. You will need to verify with that institution whether the course will satisfy specific graduation requirements.

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