

# **HONR 101 Course Titles & Descriptions**

## **Fall 2026**

### **The Meaning of Life: An Exploration of Purpose Through the College Experience (Signature Experience)**

This section of Honors 101 explores one of humanity's oldest and most personal questions: What makes a life meaningful? Using the college experience as our laboratory, we will explore what scholars across a range of academic disciplines have to say about meaning and purpose and how this pertains to our own lives. Through guided conversation, collaboration, and reflection, this course builds toward a student-driven exploration of what it means to live with intention.

### **Life by Design: Early Understandings of Constructed Living through Literature and Art (Signature Experience)**

This section of Honors 101 will explore ancient ideas of design and architecture through a study of the literature and art crafted by the giants of the ancient world, such as Vergil, Kalidasa, and the author of Gilgamesh, as well examinations of ancient holy spaces from a variety of cultures. Through the study of ancient antecedents of art, sculpture, literature, and city-building, students will develop an appreciation for early design efforts. In addition, they will be encouraged to draw connections to contemporary art and design elements and philosophies.

### **The Lived Experience: Knowledge Production through the Storytelling, the Body, and the Spaces we Inhabit**

This course we will explore different ways of knowing through personal, cultural, and social experiences. Students will explore interdisciplinary topics such as storytelling as a form of cultural knowledge, understanding through the body, and how the mapping of space impacts how we understand the world around us. Looking at the production of knowledge through lived experience, this course is designed to support student success, build self-awareness, and foster community engagement. Assignments will include discussions and hands-on projects that will ask students to be self-reflexive in how - and where - they gain their knowledge from.

### **The Visual World: Understanding, Interpreting, and Creating Meaning through Visual Media and Art**

This course examines how images shape human perception and ways of knowing. Integrating a variety of perspectives, we will explore biological and perceptual aspects of seeing to gain a deeper understanding of how visual rhetoric shapes our understanding of the world. Students develop skills in critical observation and interpretation, considering how visual images both reflect and construct social realities. The course emphasizes visual literacy as a key to understanding contemporary communication, artistic practice, and the interconnected visual world that defines modern experience. In addition to visual analysis, students will practice creating their own visual and symbolic messages, so be prepared to experiment with your creative side (no artistic experience required).

### **The Thinking Eye: Experiments in Seeing with Visual Art**

Since the days of prehistoric cave paintings humans have experimented with images as ways of understanding ourselves, our world, and so much more. How and why do we do this? What does it say about us that we are image-making creatures? In this course we'll take an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural look at the human relationship with visual images and at some of the unique ways humans have expressed and understood themselves through visual images. We'll explore the ways in which disciplines such as anthropology, art history, literature, sociology, neuroscience, optics, psychology, and creative writing can help us understand the many roles visual images play in our own lives, and we'll do our own experiments in seeing as well.

### **Moonlight on the Wabash: Hoosier Readings, Literature, and Art**

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### **Listening in a Loud World: Music, Identity, and Meaning Beyond the Playlist**

What does it mean to truly listen in a world filled with sound? How does music shape who we are? This course invites first-year honors students to begin their academic journey by exploring music as a powerful way of knowing the world. Through critical listening, interdisciplinary dialogue, discussion, research, and creative inquiry, students examine how music shapes identity, preserves memory, challenges power, and reflects social

change, political movements, technological innovation, and global exchange. From Beethoven to Beyoncé, from country to K-pop and the digital streaming economy— We will move across historical periods and global contexts, exploring how songs tell stories about nationhood, protest, spirituality, technology, and belonging while developing the habits of honors scholarship: intellectual curiosity, information literacy, and collaborative knowledge-making. Class sessions combine discussion, campus engagement (including visits to Bracken Library, the David Owsley Museum of Art, Sursa Hall, and Emens Auditorium), and creative projects. As an introduction to honors education, the course cultivates a multidisciplinary approach to texts, sound, communities, and oneself— demonstrating that listening is both an academic practice and a way of living thoughtfully in a complex world.

### **Contemporary Food Themes: History, Theory, Art, and Literature**

This course will be an interdisciplinary study of contemporary themes of food. Together, we will examine historical, theoretical, artistic, and literary food themes and contexts. What we eat and how we eat it says much about ourselves and our place in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century world. For this section of HONR 101, we will discuss the ways in which food and feasting play a significant role in contemporary cultures. Over the course of this class, we will explore food and feasts as symbolic entities, ritualistic objects and events, instruments of ideology and power, markers of class and etiquette, and as examples of material culture.

### **The Social Life of Genes: Biology, Identity, and Stories that Shape Us**

This section of Honors 101 invites students to answer a deceptively simple question: What do our genes say about who we are? We will explore the biological, cultural, and personal stories that shape human identity and wrestle with what those stories mean for how we understand ourselves and the world around us. Along the way, we will build curiosity, critical thinking, and community that define the honors experience.

### **All in at the Casino of Life- Playing the Odds when Navigating Uncertainty, Risk, and Fate**

How do we successfully navigate a world filled with unknowns? How do we think well when we can't know? This course introduces honors education by wrestling with the role of uncertainty across disciplines: We'll look at how probability in mathematics models chance and leverage it in order to make the most rational choice, learn how to recognize and measure bias in order to better defend against it, and situate stories involving fate, chance, and freedom within the tapestry of the human condition. Along the way, we'll learn some of the complexities that real-world problems demand, and see how honors

education helps us dig deeper than merely superficial solutions- how to pull expertise from labs, special collections, and research centers across campus.

### **The Life and Times of the American Dream: A Philosophical Journey**

There is hardly a more strange and malleable word in the American vocabulary than “The American Dream.” This is, in part, because it is a word weighed down by so much historical, cultural, social, economic, political, and religious baggage. In this course we’ll do our best to unpack this strange word from a variety of media. Although we will examine it primarily through a philosophical lens, from some of the best thinkers in the American intellectual tradition, our approach will also include many forays into the social sciences and the arts. This course is meant for anyone interested in the world of ideas, but especially regarding the idea of what “Americanness” means, both historically and in our contemporary context.

### **For the Love of Ideas: Beauty and Tragedy in Greece and Rome**

Join us as we explore some of the foundational personal, social, religious, and cultural ideas of the ancient world – all of which are still with us today. We will traverse beauty, honor, and family in The Ramayana, look at the problem of suffering and enlightenment with The Buddha, but then pay special attention to the Greeks and Romans regarding what it means to live well, indeed, what it means to live both tragically and beautifully. The goal of this course is to weave these separate threads together into a rich tapestry of what it means to be a human being, then and now.

### **The Human Condition: Russian Style**

This course will take us on a literary journey through the rapidly changing social and cultural landscape of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to try to discover what it means to be a human being. Our case study will be great Russian writers and artists, who will help us grapple with the introspection of our mortality, the ennui of bourgeoisie culture, and the fracturing of selfhood under the crushing weight of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Together, we will try to better understand this amorphous thing we call humanness in a post-enlightened and post-industrial world during a time of radical sociopolitical change. This course is for anyone who loves history, literature, philosophy, art history and the wonderful ideas that are born from them.

### **Misinformation and Misunderstanding: Understanding How We Take In & Retain Information**

This class focuses on how misinformation and misunderstanding develop and persist in society. The psychological mechanisms (such as cognitive biases and heuristics) which lead many to develop inaccurate beliefs or perceptions, either about themselves or the world around them, will be explored. Other topics in the course include vulnerable to scams, deception and social deduction, A.I. and social media algorithms, decision making, phobias, and pseudoscience.

### **Wandering: Storytelling & Seeing the World Through a Traveler's Eyes**

College is not just a place you attend, but a new world you enter as a traveler. In this course, students will explore culture, power, and identity through travel literature, fiction, and film while learning how stories shape what we know and how we see. Drawing from disciplines including narrative theory, anthropology, history, psychology, and creative inquiry, students will examine storytelling as a powerful way of knowing. Through travel journals and a collaborative guidebook project, students will practice observing, reflecting, and engaging their new community with curiosity and purpose.