

JUNIOR INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINAR PROGRAM

DIRECTOR OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
David Christiansen

The Junior Interdisciplinary Seminar (JINS) is the signature course of Truman's Liberal Studies Program. Each seminar offers students models of how connections can be made among modes of inquiry, knowledge bases, discourse conventions, and disciplinary perspectives. The Truman faculty who teach these courses encourage and model interdisciplinarity as a lifelong learning habit and assist students in integrating the multiple ways of thinking about issues, problems, and concepts associated with diverse academic disciplines.

Each JINS course is designed to encourage and enhance student agility as thinkers. "Agile learners" are able both to specialize in disciplines and to work as generalists. They can draw upon and connect the diverse perspectives, skills, and knowledge they have acquired through their education as they address new and complex situations in their personal, professional, and civic lives.

JINS courses are designed to prompt several learning outcomes:

- ◆ Engagement with intersections or tensions between two or more academic disciplines with respect to applied methods or tools of inquiry;
- ◆ Investigation of ways in which a given topic or concept may be understood and questioned by two or more different disciplines within a larger civic, cultural, or professional context;
- ◆ Consideration of a problem in the students "home" or major discipline via the lens of another discipline's perspectives;
- ◆ Knowledge of, and reflection on, how advanced level content from two or more disciplines interact; and
- ◆ Integrated analysis and reflection informed by approaches or methods from two or more disciplines.

Each Junior Interdisciplinary Seminar counts as one of three required writing-enhanced courses.

Prerequisites

1. Junior status or "rising junior" status (i.e., full-time sophomores with at least 45 credit hours at the time of registration).
2. Some courses have additional prerequisites. See the individual seminar descriptions below for further information.

Seniors who failed to enroll in a JINS course during their junior year must wait until all Juniors have pre-registered before they will be allowed to enroll in a JINS course.

SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS

JINS 300 – Cultural Crossroads (template course) 3 hours

Cultural Crossroads is an interdisciplinary analysis of a geographical configuration. From this analysis, students will compose a biography that draws on methodologies of at least two disciplines and will deal with an aspect related to the course's specific topic. Possible topics:

Cairo

An interdisciplinary analysis of the largest city in Africa and the Middle East from prehistory to the twenty-first century.

Istanbul

An interdisciplinary analysis of Istanbul from prehistory to the twenty-first century.

Peruvian Culture

A detailed examination of the culture of Peru, its origins, evolution, and present-day composition. In this course we will read pages on customs, history, literature, anthropology, archaeology, politics and economics.

The Many Faces of Spain

A panoramic view of the origin and evolution of the many cultures of Spain, as well as its contemporary society. Students will examine the history, traditions, art, music, literature, geography, politics, economics of Spain through topical discussions to reflect on today's Spanish cultural mosaic.

JINS 301 – Music in Religious Thought and Practice 3 hours

Music in Religious Thought and Practice explores and analyzes links that occur and are made between sacred music and religious ideologies. During the seminar, students will examine published literature in the disciplines of Music and Religious Studies about a specific historical place and geographical time and place and develop writing projects within that area.

JINS 302 – Wilderness Leadership 3 hours

Wilderness Leadership is an interdisciplinary analysis of small group (team) leadership dynamics in wilderness setting, emphasizing the interplay of factors (psychological, physiological, sociological) in extreme conditions.

JINS 303 – Computers and Natural Language 3 hours

This seminar examines how computers do (and perhaps someday will) use human language (spoken and written), and how computers affect use of language.

JINS 304 – Native American Conflict 3 hours

Through reading, researching, and writing about reports of the conflicts between Indians and Whites throughout American history, students will learn more about their own cultural assumptions as well as the perspectives and methodologies of the disciplines of history, anthropology, ethnology, and literary studies.

JINS 305 – Issues in Democratic Institutions 3 hours

An interdisciplinary confrontation with issues currently affecting the institution of American public education on

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every level, the seminar challenges students to define for themselves what the aims of American education should be (what should be taught, whom society should educate) and to analyze specific individual and group responsibility for the education of a democratic society.

JINS 306 – The Rock Generation

3 hours

The Rock Generation seminar focuses on the rock music and social relationships between the United States and the United Kingdom from 1960-1980 using analysis and exploration of the perspectives of Musicology and Sociology.

JINS 307 – Friendship

3 hours

Friendship in the contemporary U.S. has been called “the neglected relationship” because few social ceremonies mark the beginning, development, or ending of friendships as significant relationships despite the reality that many of us identify it as the relationship most necessary for survival and happiness. Seminar members will scrutinize the nature and varieties of friendship from a number of perspectives (philosophy, psychology, sociology).

JINS 308 – U.S. Immigration Laws and Immigrant

Writings

3 hours

An interdisciplinary approach to the relationships among law, history and literature. During this course students will examine legal documents, legal history, and immigrant literature concerning a particular ethnic group (for example: Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Jewish, or Irish Americans)

JINS 309 – Decision Making Seminar

3 hours

This course examines the perspectives of several social science disciplines, including economics, sociology, psychology, and political science, as they relate to the understanding of decision making. Students will consciously integrate the concepts of several disciplines to study and help explain a decision in the individual, organizational, or political arena.

JINS 310 – The Classical Perspective on Ancient

Historians

3 hours

An examination of several prominent ancient Greek and Roman historians, with special focus upon the interdisciplinary manner in which Classicists approach ancient histories. All readings will be in English translation.

JINS 311 – Race, Class, and Gender

3 hours

Using the perspectives of multiple disciplines, students in the Race, Class, and Gender Seminar explore race, class, and gender and sexuality as socially constructed categories that continue to wield considerable power over a person’s chances for success.

JINS 312 – American Social Character

3 hours

Drawing upon different conceptual paradigms, from multiple disciplines, students will further develop critical, sympathetic, and reflective understanding of the American social character and the ways in which it has changed through history.

JINS 313 – Bloomsbury

3 hours

This course will examine the collaborative work of the group of artists, writers, and thinkers known as Bloomsbury who were active in the early part of the twentieth century in England. The written and visual works of Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and others will be read, appreciated and discussed as contributors to modernism.

JINS 314 – Economics of Gender

3 hours

This seminar explores male/female interrelationships with an emphasis on work place environments. It calls on several disciplinary perspectives regarding issues of gender. Selected topics include: household formation, labor force participation, market work, income determination and earnings differentials. Prerequisite: STAT 190.

JINS 315 – Nuclear Weapons: History and Physics

3 hours.

We will study nuclear weapons from the discovery of the atomic nucleus to the present. We will approach the subject, specifically, from the point of view of the historian and the physicist, along with whatever other ways of knowing you wish to bring to the conversation. The class will be discussion oriented, with a few labs incorporated into the class meetings, and a considerable amount of reading and writing.

JINS 316 – Portrayals of Women (template course)

3 hours

This course examines depictions of women in a variety of literary, artistic, and cultural contexts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Themes may vary from section to section, but the inquiry, research, writing, reflection, and discussion will be interdisciplinary. Possible topics:

Ancient Greece

This course will focus on depictions of women in Greek literature and art from Homer to Aristophanes, but will also address other related themes in order to elucidate cultural phenomena of Ancient Greece. Such themes include the following: mythology and religion, warfare and social/political theory, art and architecture, philosophy and scientific inquiry.

Corsets and Kimonos: Victorian Britain and Edo Japan

Compares and contrasts the portrayals of women in two distinct cultures: Great Britain during the reign of Victoria (1837-1903) and Japan during the Edo period (1615-1868.)

The Middle Ages

This course will focus on depictions of women and women’s roles in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. C.E. These depictions may come from the women authors themselves, from male contemporaries, or from less literary portrayals in sources such as canon law, visual art, musical compositions, medical treatises, etc.

JINS 317 – Women’s Movement in Intercultural

Perspective: The U.S and South Africa

3 hours

This course will trace progress toward gender equality in the U.S. and South Africa, as it is achieved both through grassroots activism and through other types of strategic movement by women to empower themselves. Cultural and economic differences between the two countries and

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among the women within them will be examined as possible barriers to female solidarity.

JINS 318 – Classical Athenian Humanism
3 hours

An examination of the humanistic movement in Fifth Century B.C. Athens. All readings will be in English translation.

JINS 319 – Human and Computer Cognition
3 hours

An interdisciplinary course that addresses the issue of how humans and (perhaps) computers are able to reason.

JINS 320 – Development of the Book
3 hours

An interdisciplinary investigation of the forces which have conditioned the composition, production, and consumption of the Western book from antiquity to the present, with particular emphasis upon transitional moments such as the fourth-century replacement of the roll by the codex and the fifteenth-century advent of print.

JINS 321 – Leadership Analysis: Exploring the Final Frontiers
3 hours

This course examines the dynamics of small-group leadership in the exploration of aerospace and undersea environments. Leadership analysis courses expand upon knowledge learned in the modes of inquiry as an in-depth exercise in critical thinking.

JINS 322 – Architecture: Forms and Structures
3 hours

This course stresses a critical approach to architecture through an analysis of historical context, function, materials, patronage, structure, architectural theories and styles.

JINS 323 – Dress and Self Image
3 hours

This course examines clothing from the social psychological, aesthetic and communicative points of view.

JINS 324 – Contexts of Disability
3 hours

The interactions between various disciplines will be explored in order to understand disability as a cultural phenomenon shared by civic contexts.

JINS 325 – Rural America
3 hours

This course explores ways of conceptualizing and defining “rural,” describes the geographic, social, economic, and political characteristics found in rural places, and discusses the implications of using alternative perspectives. Beyond this common introduction, specific sections of the course will examine in more detail selected contemporary issues relevant to rural people and places.

JINS 326 – On Human Nature
3 hours

When we inquire about being human, what is the contribution of the sciences and of the humanities respectively? In this course, we investigate whether the two fields make mutually exclusive assertions or whether some form of mediation is possible, particularly between biological

perspectives on human nature on the one hand and religious and philosophical perspectives on the other.

JINS 327 – Illuminations
3 hours

A writing workshop and studio art course in which students explore the relations of written and graphic interpretations of literary texts, and how these shape the meaning of a text.

JINS 328 – Exploration and Discovery (template course)
3 hours

This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of a period of exploration or moment of discovery in human history. Possible topics:

The Renaissance Age of Exploration

This course examines the controversies of European expansion from 1200-1600. Students will learn of the benefits and tragic costs associated with the contacts between Europeans and native peoples. Students will do this through studying the period and events, but also in reflecting on travel and exploration in their own lives as well as points where they come in to contact with the “new.”

JINS 329 – Language and Meaning
3 hours

This course is an interdisciplinary approach to studying language as a medium of communication. It includes both a survey of various theories of meaning and a study of symbol systems in the creation, maintenance, and change of a culture or social group (such as an academic discipline.)

JINS 330 – Environmental Economics: Issues and Policies
3 hours

This course will examine the environmental issues and resulting problems facing the world today, as well as the policy issues involved in solving these problems. It will emphasize applying the economics decision-making model to environmental issues and advantages and disadvantages of the economist’s analysis. Prerequisite: ECON 130, 200 or 201.

JINS 331 – The Chemistry of Art
3 hours

This course examines the interaction and manipulation of matter (chemistry) in order to make an aesthetically pleasing form (art), including the interaction of light with matter to produce color and the examination of materials used in such artworks as paintings, dyes, glasses and ceramics. Direct experimentation with these media will occur in a laboratory component. Prerequisite: CHEM 100 or CHEM 120-121.

JINS 332 – Death and Dying
3 hours

This course examines the historical and current perspectives on death from both philosophical and behavioral science points of view. The primary emphasis is to understand death in relation to ourselves and the social organization in which we have our identity.

JINS 333 – Conflict, Cooperation, and Choice
3 hours

This course is an interdisciplinary study of rational choice as the basis for predictive models of human behavior. We will use economics and game theory as our primary vehi-

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cles for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the rational choice assumptions, but we will also survey the way other disciplines (e.g., political science, anthropology, sociobiology, etc.) use this assumption in their models. Prerequisites: completion of statistics requirement and mathematical mode requirement.

JINS 334 – Geometry of the Universe
3 hours

In this course students will explore our evolving perceptions of the nature and origins of the universe from scientific, philosophical, and historical perspectives. The concepts of space, time, and infinity will be particularly emphasized. Prerequisites: fulfillment of Essential Skills requirement in mathematics.

JINS 335 – Ecology versus Land Use
3 hours

Through the disciplines of ecology and politics, this course examines our society's efforts to preserve wildlife habitat and maintain biodiversity, while also protecting the property rights needed for economic productivity.

JINS 336 – The Environment (template course)
3 hours

This course will investigate the natural environment from a variety of perspectives, focusing especially on the interaction between humans and the natural world. Possible topics:

Border Crossings in South and Southeast Asian Forests
An exploration of diverse disciplinary perspectives on South and Southeast Asian forests (from Pakistan to Indonesia), including readings from anthropology biology, geography, history, and literature.

Change in the Great Plains After Lewis and Clark

In this course we will link scientific knowledge with choices and behavior to examine the human impact on the Great Plains. We will examine some of the ecological principles relevant to human existence in the environment and the human perspective on these principles be they economic, philosophical, political, religious, sociological or psychological. Students will write responses to resource management dilemmas based on solid reasoning accounting for scientific knowledge and human perspective.

The Neotropics in Literature and Science

This course will examine the New World tropics through the dual perspectives of literary and scientific disciplines. We will use these disciplines to examine the commonality of relationships in the Neotropics, both the relationships between the organisms that comprise the complex ecosystems of this region and the constantly evolving relationship between human beings and the environment.

Water World-Human Influences on Aquatic Ecosystems

Water World is designed to make students aware of the variety, complexity, magnitude, and immediacy of water-related issues that modern human societies must cope with. The two main disciplinary approaches will be biology and political science.

JINS 337 – Musical Theatre
3 hours

This course examines the musical theatre form from aesthetic, historical, structural, sociological, and auteur/stylistic perspectives. Viewing of classic performances and group critiques and presentations are also special features of this course.

JINS 338 – Race and Ethnicity (template course)
3 hours

This course will examine how the construction and evolution of racial and ethnic identities have affected human society over time. Possible topics:

Latin America

This course will examine race and ethnicity in a Latin American context. This includes the region's rich racial diversity, the emergence of new forms of ethnic identity, and the politicization of these identities. Throughout this entire process we will constantly critique our assumptions of racial and ethnic categories.

Latino Health Care in America

Latino Health Care in America presents interdisciplinary perspectives of health care for Latino cultural groups in America. Students will analyze health care issues for selected cultural groups within Mexico and the United States from the theoretical and investigative modes for nursing and anthropology.

JINS 339 – Gender and Culture (template course)
3 hours

Examination of the intersections of issues of gender and cultural anthropological and literary/artistic conceptions of "culture." Possible topics:

Women of the Middle East

The study of women in the modern Middle East and North Africa through the examination of culture, both as an anthropological concept and as an artistic category (including literature and the "fine arts"). Students will examine historical, religious, and political issues through literature, theatre, music, and the visual arts, comparing the self-presented image of the women of the area with anthropological-derived descriptions and data.

JINS 340 – German-Jewish Identities
3 hours

This course examines the problems that German Jews have faced in establishing a sense of identity in the 20th century. The first part will focus on the "Jewish Question;" the second half will focus on the holocaust and holocaust memory among German-Jewish intellectuals.

JINS 341 – Sport and Society (template course)
3 hours

This course investigates the relationship between sports and the societies that produce them. Many peoples and civilizations have practiced competitive and recreational athletics throughout human history, but the forms, functions, and ideologies of sports have differed considerably. This class will focus on key aspects of athletics using a variety of different disciplinary methodologies. Possible topics:

The Olympics

The purpose of this class is to fully explore the Olympic games as an intersection among the disciplines of history, political science, sociology, and sport. Through this exploration process, the course seeks to improve both the critical thinking and writing skills of its participants.

Twentieth Century America

This course considers the impact of a variety of sports-related issues, using both "functional" and "conflict theory" approaches to trace the effects of sport upon both society at large and specific social, economic, racial, and gender-based practitioners and audiences.

JINS 342 – The Indo-Europeans

3 hours

This course uses evidence from linguistics, archaeology, and history (among other disciplines) to explore the origins and identity of the speakers of Indo-European, a language spoken over five millennia ago, which gave rise to modern languages such as English, Russian, Hindi, the Romance Languages, etc.

JINS 343 – The Horse in Art, Science, and History

3 hours

This course will examine how human perception of horses has changed over time, how art reflects the historical uses of horses since its domestication, and how humans have utilized horses historically. Science will be used to consider unique equine anatomical, physiological, and behavioral adaptations that predestined this species to play a central role in human history. Historically, students will consider how various cultures have used horses to advance political and geographic aspirations.

JINS 344 – Salome and John the Baptist

3 hours

This course explores the cultural contexts of the story of Salome and John, and the consequent literary and visual interpretations of the story from the 1st century to the present.

JINS 345 – From Page to Stage and Screen

3 hours

Students will analyze one novel of Tolstoy’s as well as several of its musical and cinematic adaptations, to determine the role visualization plays in understanding and adapting a literary work. Lectures, readings, and assignments will draw from the disciplines of literary theory, cognitive science, psychology, film theory, and dramaturgy.

JINS 346 – Varieties of Non-Violence

3 hours

An examination of the varieties of non-violence, civil disobedience, conscious objection, and related subjects, ideas, figures, and movements.

JINS 347 – Religion, Health, and Healing

3 hours

This course will explore the ways in which religious beliefs, social roles, and symbolic practices play a part in constructing a culture’s understanding of health and illness, through the disciplines of biomedicine, religious studies, psychology, and sociology.

JINS 348 – The Visual World: Color and Symmetry

3 hours

The “Visual World” is an interdisciplinary course whose main objective is to study aspects of the visual world of concern to both scientists and artists. The modules under investigation for “Color and Symmetry” are: Perspectives and Space; Color Theory; Symmetry - particularly in relation to plane patterns; Case Studies of Islamic art, African art, and Modernist Western art.

JINS 349 – Bodylore/Brainlore: Thinking with the Body

3 hours

Through a combination of theoretical readings, writing, movement, dance and discussion, this course is intended to examine past and present attitudes and ideas surrounding the body and its connection (or perceived lack thereof) to the mind. The course is interdisciplinary both in its examination of debate surrounding the mind/body split

and in the kinds of practices we will join with our theoretical investigations. Drawing from such disciplines as philosophy, sociology, physiology, literature, the fine arts, and movement, the course includes theoretical readings, writing and discussion, as well as creative writing forms and physical movement forms.

JINS 350 – Science and Society (template course)

3 hours

Astronomy in Early Human Culture

An exploration of the role of astronomy in early human cultures through an analysis of the scientific, historical, and social contexts in which these cultures existed.

Weird Science

A study of the fringes of science, which highlights the role of criticism in attaining reliable knowledge. The course surveys claims made on behalf of creationism, parapsychology, and UFOlogy, together with mainstream scientific responses. In the process, students will explore questions about the nature and boundaries of science.

JINS 351 – The Faust Tradition

3 hours

This course traces and examines the Faust Tradition from the historical Faust through the literary Fausts of Spies, Marlowe, Goethe, and Mann. We will analyze the readings as literature and as philosophical and cultural-historical artifacts of the Renaissance, Enlightenment/Romanticism, and late Modernism. Supplemental readings/films also required and discussed.

JINS 352 – Changing the World through Data

3 hours

An examination of the way attitude, opinions, and politics change in the face of data. We will look at several examples in detail, and explore the nature of truth and the history of statistics. A term paper will focus on an area of interest to the student and on the ramifications of existing and potential data upon the area.

JINS 353 – Ethical Implications of the Human Genome Project

3 hours

Students will gain an understanding of the scientific methods and techniques involved in the Human Genome Project and the results that are being obtained. They will be able to discuss and defend, from a variety of philosophical viewpoints, different issues that have arisen as a result of this information, such as: genetic testing, cloning, genetic discrimination, forensic DNA testing, genetic evolution, and geneotherapy.

JINS 354 – Insects, Disease, and Human Affairs

3 hours

This course examines the relationship between humans, insects, and disease from a biological and historical perspective. The course includes field and laboratory activities.

JINS 355 – Creativity in Arts and Sciences

3 hours

An examination of creativity in which students will (1) examine creative contributions to society, including the work of Charles and Ray Eames, (2) investigate the conditions and the habits of thought, attitude, and behavior that enhance or inhibit creativity, (3) consider the ethical responsibilities of creators for their work, (4) apply what has been learned by completing a video project in one’s area of expertise, and (5) observe, reflect, and write on the process of applying theory to one’s own practices.

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JINS 356 – The Art and Science of Humor

3 hours

This course is designed to allow students the opportunity to look at the human phenomenon of humor through the lenses of research in the hard and soft sciences. Students will come to understand what makes something humorous as well as the impact of humor on the mind and body. This course draws on the fields of sociology, psychology, physiology, medicine, communication, political science, business, education, linguistics, and literature.

JINS 357 – Bayou Blues: French Music in Louisiana

3 hours

An interdisciplinary investigation of the relationship between music and culture in the French-speaking region of Louisiana. We will use the methodologies of musicology and sociology to examine the establishment of distinct Euro-American and African-American musical styles that have developed within a French-speaking society. The emphasis will be upon the analysis of a body of music, and the people who make this music, to examine the impact of culture and the transitions of musical style in this region.

JINS 358 – Textiles as Cultural Documents: Hanging by a Thread

3 hours

This class compares and contrasts the use of textiles for form and function, reflection of cultural identity, gender and identity, and as historical documents. Students will analyze textiles to understand the aesthetic production and experiences of sociocultural groups from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. Students will explore the social, political, and economic complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions of the personal, national, global cultural belief systems.

JINS 359 – Exploration into the Origin of Life

3 hours

This course will explore the concept of the origin of life from literary and scientific perspectives. The literary aspect will comprise literature as cultural studies, particularly folklore and mythology, and will draw on philosophical and religious texts of various cultures. The scientific perspective will look into the development of our concepts about the origin of the universe and the origin of life in the universe.

JINS 360 – Amish History and Culture

3 hours

This class will examine the history and culture of the Old Order Amish in Europe and North America. Beginning with the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, we will trace Amish history in Europe until they disappear from the European stage, and Amish history in North America as they establish a durable and successful culture. We will pay some attention to related groups, such as the Hutterites and Mennonites. We will also examine Amish history and culture from the perspectives of anthropology and sociology.

JINS 361 – Innovations of War

3 hours

An examination of the societal and military issues that have driven scientific development, and the implications of these developments to military efforts and to society as a whole. Prerequisites: completion of one semester of college-level physical science (chemistry or physics), or permission of instructor.

JINS 362 – Extraterrestrial Life

3 hours

Does life or intelligence exist outside the earth? This course will consist of readings and discussion of approaches to this question from historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological perspectives. Topics will include the emergence of the "Copernican Principle," the search for life on Mars, the study of the origin of life, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) program.