“Ideas That Change the World”: Honors 201H (Gen Ed IDU)

In this interdisciplinary, discussion-based seminar, we will examine innovative thinkers, groundbreaking ideas, and the strategies that transform these ideas into effective actions.

This semester we will explore dilemmas addressed by the sciences, the arts, and the humanities. In each of these broad areas, we will focus on questions about human nature, the sources of our knowledge, and the application of that knowledge to the solving of perennial and contemporary problems. We will begin with inquiries into the nature of truth, of particular relevance in our era of debates over “alternative facts.” Then we will focus upon ongoing problems of violence, injustice, and environmental crisis. Our inquiries will establish a dialogue between past and present as we examine historical figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Rachel Carson, along with present-day innovators such as Temple Grandin and the Dalai Lama.

We will evaluate the different solutions proposed as we take up these basic questions:

- Why do some ideas become influential?
- What social conditions tend to foster ideas that enhance inclusion and diversity?
- Under what circumstances can ideas transform societies?
- How, exactly, do we go about changing the world for the better?

Honors 201H as a General Education “I” course

The University is organized into departments that focus on specific questions and that employ divergent methods. Each academic discipline (major) develops its own spirit and each tends to be highly specialized. The University’s General Education requirement complements learning focused on the major, and is intended to promote a breadth of knowledge that supports life-long learning. Consistent with this objective, in Honors 201H students will wrestle with broad interdisciplinary questions raised by highly influential works in the sciences, arts, and humanities.

Honors 201H as a US Diversity course

The University first-year diversity course requirement is designed to provide a classroom experience in which students both become familiar with diversity through academic inquiry and personally expand the ability to interact collaboratively and sensitively with students from different backgrounds and experiences.