

Spring 2026 Social Science Colloquia



S.T.E.M. in the News

Carrie Tomko

HONOR 340 – 001

MWF 10:45am - 11:35am

Students in this colloquium have an opportunity to reflect on innovations, such as: The latest in available smart phones... The ongoing discussion of global warming... The usage of self-driving cars... The challenges of feeding a growing population through technological advances in agriculture...!! As new research and technology emerge, resulting innovations enter our ever-changing world. How are these innovations communicated to the general public?? The mass media is the place where the general population learns of innovations. Students in this colloquium will engage in the analysis of the media's reporting and then the population's reaction to S.T.E.M.'s impact on society, discerning how emerging research and technology are embraced or refused by society via communication and the media's role in construction of a new reality. Class discussion is dynamic in my classes!! Interaction in class is highly encouraged through both informal individual and informal small group projects. The informal small group projects are team-building opportunities for the development of communication skills. Through the group process, students are able to interact in informal small group communication. Also, during the informal small group presentation, students gain speaking communication skills, as well as use communication skills to facilitate a question-and-answer session. Development of these communication skills is key to success in academia, as well as in career settings. Academia gives us the opportunity to both develop and practice these important communication skills. On an individual level, students select a favorite movie, related to S.T.E.M. media, of their choice, and then they present their analysis, as well as inquire to the other students through facilitation of a question-and-answer session.

Honors: The Honors Tradition

Carrie Tomko

HONOR 340 – 002

MWF 11:50am – 12:40pm

How did the Honors Complex come to be a mainstay on campus? Who led the charge for Honors education? What has happened since as early as 1921 to the present to make Honors education a prestigious opportunity? If you like stories, you will enjoy hearing these told by Honors faculty member, Carrie Tomko, who is the only person currently in The Williams Honors College who has been under every leadership individual in Honors education history. Honors students will hear, read, and witness these stories, as told by Carrie Tomko. With 50+ years of official Honors education history at The University of Akron, students who enroll in this colloquium will have the honor to learn the stories behind The Williams Honors College, formerly known as the Honors College and the Honors Program. Honors students will learn about key moments and key people in the history of Honors, as well as key faculty and staff, key alumni, keynote speakers, key events, and key individuals who have propelled The Williams Honors College to academic highlights and successes through its 50-years of rich history. Come for the stories, stay for the nostalgia, and reflect on the prestigious place that you have chosen for your academic pursuits.



Democracy, Objectivity and the US Constitution

Nathanial Blower

HONOR 340 – 003

MWF 9:40 am – 10:30 am

How should we read the United States Constitution? As a 'living document' whose meaning can change and grow alongside changes and growth in American democratic society? Or as something whose meaning is more 'static', more 'objective'? Recently more than ever, perhaps, it seems to be the second option that is preferred by justices of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS). But is it even possible to interpret the Constitution without injecting any life into it? And if it is possible, do the recent decisions of SCOTUS (on abortion and gun control, for instance) actually live up to this ideal? These questions, and a number of related political, social and philosophical questions, will be our focus in this colloquium

Salsa: History In Motion

Martha Santos

HONOR 340 – 004

Th 2:00 pm – 3:15pm

This interdisciplinary colloquium provides the opportunity to examine and experience the history, aesthetics, and movement of salsa dancing, from its origins in the Afro-Cuban rhythms and dances of enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples to its modern emergence in the Latin neighborhoods of New York during the 1970s. Through reading, discussion, and debate, we will analyze how the various rhythms and dances encompassed in salsa emerged within complex histories of globalization, colonialism, enslavement, immigration, and cultural commodification in the Caribbean and New York. Through movement, we will explore the embodied strategies through which various peoples navigated their historical circumstances and the meanings they assigned to their music and dance. As an experience in interdisciplinarity, this course invites us to imagine and participate in new ways of learning, teaching, and communicating history. Assessment will not be based on dancing ability. Instead, the course will develop its own creative language to reflect on our discovery of the history and motion of salsa.

Winning Combinations in Health Behavior: Combating Obesity

John Roncone

HONOR 340 - 501 (Online Asynchronous)

HONOR 340 – 502 (Online Asynchronous)

This social science discipline colloquium examines health behavior in an exploration to combat obesity. Areas that will be carefully examined include: Current obesity trends, assessment of body weight and body composition, etiology of obesity, health and economic consequences of obesity, dietary interventions for obesity prevention and new insights and looking into future insights. We will engage in meaningful online discussions as well as assignments, learning from other's experiences and guidance from the professor, whom has an extensive knowledge in health education and promotion. Our main book will be, Nutrition and Obesity: Assessment, Management, and Prevention, by Alexandra G. Kazaks, and Judith S. Stern. Other secondary resources will be provided to the students by the professor. Assignment readings, HW/Labs, behavior change models/theories, online discussions, and other assignments will be assessments utilized in the course. Brightspace will be utilized to deliver this online asynchronous course for content, grades, communication/announcements, communication/class roster and emails, assessments/assignments, and communications/discussions and course



materials/calendar. Students will leave the course with a sound knowledge of health behavior and exploring areas in combating the obesity epidemic in the U.S.

Winning Combinations in Health Behavior: Exploring Health Priorities

John Roncone

HONOR 340 – 801 (Hybrid)

T 5:15 pm – 6:30 pm

This social science discipline colloquium examines health behavior exploring health priority areas, such as, physical activity, stress management, and other dimensions of health-related physical fitness. The priority areas explored will be beneficial to students reflecting on their own health behavior(s), quality of life/healthy life years/lifestyle management. Students will leave the course with a sound knowledge of key health components related to mind/body health, research as well as health behavior models/theories.