January 2021 Developing a Christian Mind (DCM) Sections (revised 9/22/2020)

HNRS 150 A Food, Faith, and Place. People tend to think of their daily decision of what to eat as a matter of personal taste, but is it? In this course, students explore how food choices affect (and are affected by) food systems that have profound implications for public and environmental health, social justice, and community. By examining the social identity, ecological, and spiritual dimensions, students develop a rich interdisciplinary understanding of the act of eating. They also learn how to prepare, preserve, and enjoy wholesome foods. Field trips, team exploratories, readings, class discussions, and hands-on activities highlight options for eating well, promoting food justice, and reducing climate change. Grades are based on the quality of reflective writing, a team presentation, and a final exam. D. Koetje. 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

HNRS 150 B Grand Rapids: Race and Place. This course examines the role of race and racism in Grand Rapids from the creation of the city to the current historical moment. According to data from the 2010 census, Grand Rapids was the 26th most black/white segregated major metropolitan area in the nation, and the 23rd most Latinx/white segregated. How did that segregation develop? What maintains it? In 2015 Grand Rapids was ranked by Forbes as one of the worst cities for African Americans economically, but in a separate piece Forbes ranked Grand Rapids the best city in the nation to raise a family in. How can this be? In addition to readings and lectures, this course looks to activists, religious leaders, elected officials, nonprofit organizations, and the business community to inform our understanding of this place. An experiential approach to learning about Grand Rapids offers students the opportunity to both explore the city and wrestle with its history and identity, including the role of Calvin College. Race and racism will be examined through the lens of biblical justice. J. Kuilema. 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

IDIS 150 01 The Big Bang Theory. This course is a scientific and historical account of the progression of humanity’s understanding of the physical universe, from ancient history to the present. Important discoveries will be highlighted along the way, with fundamental scientific concepts introduced as needed in order to provide a clear picture explaining the popularity of the big bang theory. In addition, students will explore the varying Christian perspectives on the big bang theory, seeking to understand some of the conflicting interpretive frameworks that can lead to disagreement over the theory’s plausibility and theological legitimacy. This is not a survey introduction to astronomy but will cover topics pertinent to understanding the big bang theory as a scientific model. It is designed to be accessible to anyone with a high school level education in science and a firm grasp of algebra. Student learning experiences will include short lectures complemented by group discussions and activities. J. Smolinski. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

IDIS 150 02 World Christianity in Local Perspective. With our world reeling from Covid 19 and its consequences, issues like globalization and the ideal of an interconnected world are once more under scrutiny. There is nothing like a pandemic to scare people into isolationist thinking. All of this makes the study of World Christianity all the more pertinent, both as potential antidote against xenophobia and as a reality check about what it means to have a Christian identity. We will consider World Christianity from the perspective of movement across borders by looking at historical case-studies focusing specifically on pilgrim, missionary, and migrant narratives over time and across geographical regions. The course will show that Christianity has always been a religion of movement across borders of various kinds, e.g. linguistic, cultural, conceptual, and of course physical borders. In addition to reading texts and learning via other types of media about these aspects of World Christianity in historical and
contemporary perspective, we will consider the theological implication of developing a pilgrim identity as part of one’s Christian mindset. Finally, an integral part of this course would be to emphasize that nowadays one does not have to travel far in order to encounter World Christianity. It is already in our midst. Time will be set aside to encounter local migrant and ethnically diverse churches in the Grand Rapids area. Such visits aimed at encountering the global within the local will stimulate students’ understanding of the rich Christian diversity on our doorstep. Students will be assessed via a reflective diary assignment based on the church visits, an essay on the pilgrim character in and of World Christianity, and a presentation, either to be delivered in class or posted online, depending on the numbers of students enrolled. R. Muller. 8:30 am to noon.

**IDIS 150 03 Fizzy, Funky and Fermented.** Typically, we try to avoid exposure to microorganisms whenever we can – equating them with sickness and disease. But do you enjoy Cheese? Chocolate? Coffee? Kefir? Kombucha? Yogurt? Sourdough bread? Or, if you are of age, a taste of wine or sip of beer? All of these foods and many more owe their very existence to microorganisms! The microorganisms transform the food, preserving it, enhancing its flavor and nutritional benefits – true “real food.” In this course we will investigate how humans have harnessed microorganisms to make these foods by making these foods ourselves. Students will dig into the diversity of microorganisms used in making them, the nuanced metabolic processes that lend each food its particular flavor and health benefits, and how changes in microbe community structure and function over time participates in the development of flavor and texture. Additionally, the rich cultural values and societal impacts associated with the long history of many of these foods will be discussed and compared with mass production and artificial additives that dominate today’s market. Students will perform hypothesis-driven experiments using different microorganisms, components, and preparation methods to create their own unique live culture real food. These lab activities will be supplemented by guided visits to West Michigan companies producing some of these foods. Science and non-science majors are welcome; a science background is not assumed. Evaluation will take place through design and leadership of food-making experiments, reflection assignments, class presentation and integrative essays. A course fee of $65 will be assessed to cover supplies and field trip expenses. K. DuBois & J. Wert. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 04 Movies and Music: Theological Themes.** This course examines the expression of theological themes in select musical works and films. Compositions studied include works by Haydn (The Creation), Bach (St. John Passion), and Mozart (Requiem). Films analyzed include Babette’s Feast, The Mission, The Seventh Seal, and Amadeus. Where possible, the relevant libretto or screenplay is read prior to listening to or viewing the work in question. Prerequisites: interest in theology, the arts, and their intersection; readiness to listen carefully and watch discerningly; and willingness to engage in discussion. Students will: 1) acquire a knowledge of select theological themes 2) become acquainted with certain sacred compositions (and their composers) 3) enhance their listening skills 4) become acquainted with certain films (and their directors) 5) advance their skills in film analysis 6) exercise their skills in discussion and oral presentation. Students will be required to do readings, keep a journal, write a paper, engage in discussion, and participate in a final exam. R. Plantinga. 2:00 - 5:00 pm.

**IDIS 150 05 Politics As Calling and Vocation: Possibilities and Tensions.** This is a DCM for all who are drawn to politics, either out of frustration or allure, and want to know better how Christians ought to operate within the two main activities of politics: making laws and running for office. The class will explore whether it is possible to think of work in government and politics, particularly in representative democracies such as the United States, as a Christian calling. Politics involves the authoritative but
usually peaceful allocation of power and is thus a coercive exercise that in normal times tries not to feel or look coercive. The ethical dilemmas in politics are many, involving both individual responsibility for imperfect action as well as the inevitably negative aspect of policy actions, even if mostly unintended. With its highly charged atmosphere, complex morality and ethics, and low public trust, is contemporary politics, particularly in the United States of America, something that Christians should avoid? Or is this precisely the time that calls for engagement? The class will examine the historic Christian understandings of the role of government and its offices and realistic Christian expectations for government and politics today, in the DCM framework of creation, fall, redemption, and vocation. Concepts to be explored include the main evangelical, Catholic (subsidiarity and solidarity) and Reformed/Protestant (sphere sovereignty) interpretations of the possibilities and obligations of Christian politics, expectations and hope for proximate public justice through politics, the questions of virtue and character by political actors, and other key markers of a thoughtful Christian discussion about politics and its processes and ends. D. Koopman. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 06 Making History at Calvin University.** What better way to understand the educational mission of Calvin University than by digging into its archives? This DCM is structured around active student learning. We will be conducting historical research in Hekman Library’s Heritage Hall, exploring an array of topics related to Calvin’s history. (For example: Calvin sports rivalries, campus architecture, international students at Calvin, Calvin and the civil rights movement, or Betsy DeVos’s Calvin). We’ll explore the integration of faith and learning in terms of Calvin’s history, and in terms of doing professional historical research and public history. Students are graded on the basis of course writing and a final (individual or group) project that may involve public history exhibits or publishable essays that will be shared with wider audiences. K. Du Mez. 8:30 am to noon.

**IDIS 150 10 DCM: Anthropology, Anime and Globalization.** The distinctly Japanese entertainment industry of anime is a worldwide phenomenon. The interim considers anime as a culturally specific product consumed in disparate cultural contexts. The interim begins with a study of the origins of and cultural significance through time of anime in Japan. Through this study, the interim considers anime as both reflective of larger Japanese cultural elements as well as anime as an active agent of cultural change in Japan. Beyond studying anime as a cultural force in Japan, the interim also considers how anime is consumed globally in diverse cultural systems. By looking at anime through this lens, the interim affords the study of cultural integrity in the face of globalization. T. Vandenberg. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 11 Dramatic Families: Dreams, Dysfunctions, and Occasional Solutions in Shakespeare and Modern Drama.** This DCM section will study a number of plays featuring families suffering from maladies such as death, abandonment, and betrayal; these same families have members who each have their own dreams, desires, and aspirations. We will ask questions such as these: How do these families differ from what might be considered God’s design for families? What has brought about these problematic situations? How do characters’ dreams seek to rise above the dysfunction? How are they the cause of it? How is redemptive hope present (or absent) in the different families? How is all of this relevant to our own lives? How can the study of such material glorify God, draw us closer to Him and others as we become increasingly conformed to His image, and help advance His Kingdom? We will study Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Ibsen’s *A Doll House*, Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*, Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, and Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*, as well as Plantinga’s *Engaging God’s World*. Students will have the opportunity to view video productions of the plays. Evaluation includes
quizzes on each play and on Engaging God's World, several short integrative essays, a final take-home exam, class participation and Moodle Forums. D.V. Urban, 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 12 Literature, Ecology, and the Climate Crisis.** Grappling with the climate crisis requires not only technological shifts and innovations but also a renewal of imagination and spirituality. This course engages fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction connected to the climate crisis in order to challenge our conventional thinking and imagine possible futures. Readings include a novel about forest biology and ecoterrorism, selections of nature poetry, a volume of essays by a Potawatomi botanist, and a lyrical account of adventures in the earth’s “underlands,” among others. Selections from Christian ecotheology writings, meanwhile, help inform a reassessment of traditional Christian theology and practice in light of the “Anthropocene” era. Our goal is to explore anew the right relationships among God, humans, and the more-than-human creation. Students are graded on participation, written reflections, and a final project. D. Rienstra. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 14 God Rested; Why Can’t You?** Living in a life of a 24/7 world, the notion of rest may come to our mind as an anachronism, a fantasy, or simply unimaginable. While we are created to worship God and rest in Him, we tend to worship our work, and rest in ourselves. These distortions affect our perceptions of ourselves, our relationships with others, and most importantly, our relationship with God. We may wonder, “Do I realize life while I live it, every, every minute?” This class will examine some of the personal and socio-cultural forces that drive us toward living a restless life. In addition, this class will assist students in developing a new perspective that will help rediscover leisure, work and rest. Y. Lee. 8:30 am to noon.

**IDIS 150 15 Faith and Sport.** This course will look at sport in our society through the lens of Christianity including how and why a Christian should play, spectate, and parent young athletes. Topics include youth sport, race and gender in sport, extreme sports, coaching, and leadership. Course methods will include lecture, discussion, film, research, observation and reflection of an athletic contest, readings, quizzes, and a presentation. K. Vande Streek. 8:30 am to noon.

**IDIS 150 16 DCM: Kicks, Rides, and Digs: The Minutiae and Metanarrative of Environments.** When you sit down on the first day of class, your environment is screaming at you: the syllabus is in a serif font, your neighbor has on fly knit shoes, the seats all face the front of the room. Each of these tiny choices shapes how you interact with what you read, who you talk to, and what you wear tomorrow. To be an effective agent of renewal in the world, it is important to understand how your environment impacts you and learn how to inform these interactions for others. Design thinking requires all to thoughtfully consider the ramifications of creating or consuming something. It encourages one to have a broad perspective, to search for solutions in unusual places, and to develop an articulate process of exploration. Utilizing discussion, critiques, lecture, group presentations, design briefs, and object creation, students will examine design practices, debate the merits and pitfalls of design consequences, and develop a vocabulary surrounding design thinking and the objects that surround them daily. Open ONLY to students in the Artists Collaborative. B. Williams. 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**IDIS 150 19 Norms and Gender Discrimination.** This course will explore, analyze various forms of gender discrimination and exclusion. Such discriminating and exclusive practices are rooted in inherited norms (beliefs, traditions, taboos, customs, and myths, etc.) especially in authoritarian/collectivist societies. Gender Discriminating norms continue to play significant roles in marginalizing women and discriminating against them by limiting their capabilities, participation, and functionings in many spheres.
of life. The course materials will be closely related to my book, "Norms and Gender Discrimination in the Arab World" (Palgrave Macmillan, October 2015) and C. Plantinga, “Engaging God’s World” (Eerdmans, 2002). The instruction style for this short interim course will include regular lectures, students’ led discussions, watching video clips and movies. Students will be evaluated based on their active participations, homework, short essays, and final exam. A. Abadeer. 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

**IDIS 150 20 The unbearable lightness of economic decisions: Are we really rational?** How do human beings make choices? How do they make economic choices when their economic decision may involve substantial risk and uncertainty? Are those choices and decisions always rational? Mainstream economics has assumed that human beings and their behavior are fundamentally rational. However, many studies in behavioral economics suggest that human psychology plays an important role in economic decisions. These studies find that actual decisions people make are often seemingly irrational under the paradigm of the mainstream economics. Understanding our full humanity and the role of the human mind in economic decisions is important, as it helps to create better policies for our society and for the wellbeing of those who live in poverty. In this course, students will learn about the general thinking processes of human beings and psychology behind the processes. Students will also discuss the limitations, weaknesses, and dangers of our thinking processes using real world examples. Furthermore, students will extend the findings to Christian faith, seeking to explore the link between our full humanity and sovereignty of God through the lens of Christ. To this end, a significant portion of this course will also be allocated on inductive Bible studies. Overall, this course will use lectures, small group discussions, video clips, movies, and students’ paper presentations. This course will also replicate some of the experiments behavioral economists used in class to test the rationality of human beings. S. Lim. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 22 Considering the Evidence.** People use data (big and small, but especially big) to gain insight about the world and make decisions. Evidence-based practices and decision-making are becoming the standard to justify choices and actions by individuals, schools, businesses, governments. But how does the process of learning from data happen, how can it go wrong, and how might a Reformed Christian engage with it? This course fulfills the DCM core; readings common to IDIS 150 sketch out biblical themes and help students begin to formulate a Reformed Christian frame of reference. The course will also introduce students to applied data-analysis techniques to present data, quantify relationships, estimate uncertainty, and classify observations, all from a statistical perspective. Students will consider data analysis (hands-on in-class practicals and real-world case-studies) in light of DCM readings to gain additional perspective on themes of justice, truth, and revelation. Previous experience with statistics and/or computer programming is welcome but not required (the course does not meet the mathematics core or interim requirements). S. DeRuiter. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 23 Reading the Newspaper with Blaise Pascal: Gambler, Moralist, and Lapsed Mathematician.** Pascal believed that the chief obstacle to happiness that humans face is our relentless, restless pursuit of happiness. And he evidently struggled with this himself -- at various points in his life mathematics brought Pascal great joy, but he also developed a great ambivalence about it, and questioned whether mathematics (and other kinds of scholarship) was just a diversion from knowing and loving God. Pascal's existential concerns were not original to him, but the mathematical depth he possessed informed his thought in a way that is distinctly modern. Pascal's mathematical work spanned three eras (classical geometry, calculus, and probability/statistics). This class will look at some of Pascal most beautiful mathematical work in each of these areas, and consider how Pascal assessed the strengths and
weaknesses of mathematics in looking at some of life’s deeper questions. We’ll particularly consider questions like, What is certainty? What is risk? What does it mean to trust in God? How should you approach some of your most significant decisions in life (related to childbirth, medicine, finance, etc.) especially in areas involving both trust in experts, and substantial risk? The course will involve readings, journaling, daily in class problem solving, and a final paper. No prior mathematical background will be assumed beyond basic algebra. N. Sunukjian. 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

**IDIS 150 24 Finding Refuge.** There were 79.5 million people displaced from their homes at the end of 2019, according to UNHCR, the UN’s Refugee Agency. Among that number, there are 26 million refugees, people forced to leave their home countries because of threat to their lives.

In response to what is both a global and local reality, this course will offer space to consider what it means to serve and welcome refugees. In this course, you will listen to the stories of people forced from their homes; learn more about the historical and political events that force people to leave their homes; increase understanding of the organizations and processes with which refugees engage; consider what it means for you and your community to welcome refugees as neighbors.

This learning will be shaped by reflection on our identity as people who need refuge, the Bible’s mention of sojourners, hospitable conversational practices, as well as interviews with & panels of experts – both refugees and welcomees. Evaluation for the class is based on engagement in class activities & discussions, reflective writing, and a researched presentation. S. VanderBie. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 25 Trail Blazing: Navigating College as a First-Generation College Student.** Are you blazing a trail in college? Are you a first-generation student? First-generation students (i.e., students for whom neither of their parents graduated from a four-year institution) bring a unique set of gifts and face a unique set of challenges as they transition to life at and beyond university. This course examines your story and others, research about first-generation college students, and the skills needed in and beyond college (e.g., resume building, networking, finance). And, we’ll engage guiding principles of the Reformed Christian tradition to frame our exploration. Through interviews, readings, discussions, presentations, panels, meals out, and other practices we will seek to better understand the unique experience of first-generation students, tell our own stories, and develop resources to support future students transitioning to Calvin. Preference given to first-generation college students. J. VanderMolen. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 26 The Music of Joy.** “It is a certain sound of joy without words, the expression of a mind poured forth in joy.” For St. Augustine, music—especially wordless singing—is a means through which joy becomes embodied in meaningful sound. This linkage of music and joy is deeply embedded in human culture from antiquity to the present day. And as for St. Augustine, such music is for many the expression of joy rooted in contemplation of God. But music can also trigger a response that is palpably similar to the experience of joy, that might be described as not only expressive of joy but an actual experience of joy itself. In this way it may produce what C. S. Lewis described as a “stab of joy:” an experience that may arise, unlooked-for, at any time and in any circumstances. Such experiences can produce an almost unbearable longing that finds its true object in Jesus Christ alone. Building on key passages in the Old and New Testaments, the task of this course is to assemble a framework for understanding joy and its relationship to the experience of music. Consideration is given to how joy emerges even in the midst of sorrow, and that the experience of joy can lead to compulsive behaviors.
and even idolatry. Musical examples include chants by Hildegard of Bingen and the polyphonic organum of the medieval cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, music by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and other classical composers, the progressive rock of Yes, the jazz of John Coltrane, and film scores by Howard Shore (The Lord of the Rings) and Vangelis Papathanassiou (Chariots of Fire). Students will keep a daily journal, write an integrative essay, and take a final exam. T. Steele. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

**IDIS 150 27 Techophobia: The Fear of Technology in Fiction.** This course examines fiction (film, TV, short stories, novels) as an index of people’s fears about technology. Students investigate the sources, contours, reasonableness, and possible effects of the technological fears expressed in fiction. The course will give special attention to deep-seated fears related to what it means to be human. Students will engage in class discussion, short group projects, analysis of film & TV, creative writing, and reflection on all readings and viewings. G. Pauley. 8:30 am to noon.

**IDIS 150 28 Banning the Imagination.** This course focuses on the ways in which North American culture handles books, films, and visual art that many in the culture may find disturbing and problematic. The course will examine the ways that imaginative art has been censored and banned for the sake of “safety,” or as a response to perceived obscenity, or as a rejection of challenges to approved norms, or simply as a refusal to accept a given imaginative approach or work. Thus, for example, we will look at Craig Thompson’s graphic novel Blankets and Madeleine L’Engle’s A Wrinkle in Time—the novel and the film adaptation—to think about imaginative presentations of theological truth. With M. T. Anderson’s Feed, we will look at issues of language, censorship, and social media. With Sherman Alexie’s Diary of a Part-Time American Indian and Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, we’ll discuss issues of gender and sexuality. We’ll consider racial assumptions as we look at To Kill a Mockingbird alongside Ernest Gaines’s A Lesson Before Dying. In all of these areas, our focus will be on how people of faith read and view and interpret imaginative art. To this end, the course is conducted through reading and discussion and debate, through viewing of certain films and works of art, through written response papers, and through projects that engage with the questions at hand. Students will read several required works and will work on projects designed to give them opportunity to make their own explorations of the imagination in art and literature. D. Hettinga. 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.