

## Honors Program: Science, Technology and Ethics

### First Seminar: **On Violence**

The first seminar is devoted to the question of violence in contemporary life. It explores ways in which science, technology, and ethics can be brought to bear in explaining the prevalence of violence in contemporary culture. Topics include domestic violence, community violence, the relationship of technology and violence, and psychoanalytical approaches to the deep structures of violence in the human psyche. The opening of the course was devoted to a thorough reading of the Tyler Clemente case and its foregrounding of the uses of technology that result in outbursts of violence.

Plenary Sessions\* on *Violence and the Family* and *Violence in the Cinema* were presented both in New York and New Jersey. The full texts of these presentations were posted to the online blackboard course site and are included here.

### Second Seminar: **Redesigning Life: Beauty and the Body in Culture**

The second seminar is devoted to the study of beauty as it is expressed in changing attitudes towards the body and its representations in culture. Beginning with Plato and Aristotle students first encounter material beauty as a reflection of a cosmic order. They go on to study the Vitruvian model of architectural principles that Leonardo da Vinci used to explore human beauty and balance as a Renaissance ideal. The modern notion of destructiveness of beauty is explored in two major literary texts: *Death in Venice* and *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Finally beauty is explored in its relationship to technology which, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is used prosthetically to extend and enhance the natural limitations of the human body. Key examples were studied in depth: eating disorders and their relation to advertising images of the perfect body, the cyborg or the fusion of the body and technology, prosthetic enhancement of the body for aesthetic purposes (cosmetic surgery, breast enhancement, dental bleaching, etc.)

Plenary Sessions were presented in New York and New Jersey on: *Technology, Prosthesis, and the Cyborg* and *Two Versions of Death in Venice: Mann and Visconti*.

### Third Seminar: **Redesigning the World: Environmentalism, Sustainability, and the Future of the Earth.**

The third seminar is devoted to an exploration of the current concern with the environment and the sustainability of the natural order. This reflection begins with a study of myths of origin that appear in all religious cultures. Students then proceed to study the romanticism of the American 19<sup>th</sup> century, reading both Emerson and Thoreau who locate the good in Nature and evil as a corruption that results from industrialization. The Hudson River School of painting, the first great American art movement provides images for studying the

difference between an idealized and romanticized version of nature and a real concern for sustainable practices. The next step in this intellectual journey is to understand the politicization of environmentalism, i.e. how it came to be associated with progressive left-wing politics. Finally students study specific examples of man-made environmental catastrophes in their scientific, technological, socio-political, and human dimensions.

Plenary Sessions: Dr. Howard Schiffman, Associate Professor of Environmental Education, Steinhardt School, New York University presented *Our Oceans, Our Lives, Now and Forever?* in New York. Students from New Jersey and the online section attended. The second plenary session *Entropy, Systems, Serialism and Koyaanisqatsi* presented a model for understand the scientific underpinnings of man-made disaster in the context of film and music.

\*Unless otherwise noted, all plenary sessions were written and presented by program director Dr. William Cipolla.