

2022 SPOTLIGHT ON FACULTY INNOVATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION

web.uri.edu/general-education



ALISSA COX

How do we protect biodiversity? Who has access to water? How is social justice connected to environmental justice? These are just a few of the questions Professor Alissa Cox uses to guide students in NRS 100: *Natural Resource Conservation*. In this introductory course, students examine the use and management of natural resources with a survey of contemporary issues and environmental challenges such as biodiversity conservation, water resources, food production, sustainability, and climate change. Through hybrid in-person and online delivery, the course incorporates case studies, ongoing reflection, and field trips to help students apply course concepts to real world experiences. For the culminating course assignment, students work in small groups to develop a walking tour of campus. This five-stop tour must connect issues of ecology to URI's campus and in doing so, engage the audience to consider how they might positively impact some of the challenges facing the environment and our campus more specifically. It is Professor Cox's hope that through these activities and assignments, students learn how to discover and vet information, how to communicate that information, and most importantly, how one's choices affect the world around them. According to Professor Cox, "hearing students' stories is what I love most about teaching the class. It's amazing when students make meaning of the world around them and discover who they are and what fulfills them to live their best life."

NRS 100
Natural Resource
Conservation

College of the
Environment and
Life Sciences



EMMETT GOODS

Professor Emmett Goods is passionate about the influence of music on civic issues, and it is this passion that inspired him to design MUS 301: *Music as a Form of Social Protest*. In this course, students explore how music can serve as a voice for social justice and change. Over the course of the semester, students journey through the unifying aspects of music, connecting them with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion on a deeper level. Beginning with The Blues and how it became the backbone of open protest in America, the course uses "listening reflections" to discuss historical milestones of the 20th century, including the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War protests. The course concludes by examining the impact of modern-day Hip Hop and Rap on social injustices. For Professor Goods, this course is his call to action "so students can fix all the stuff I thought my generation would have already fixed. I want students to walk away from this course with information that can inspire them to make a change." As a final project, students select a social issue such as transgender rights or the BLM movement in other countries, identify a related song, and conduct a lyrical analysis to flesh out how the song speaks the artist's truth. It is this laser focus that Professor Goods believes will serve to ignite his students' civic engagement.

MUS 301
Music as a Form
of Social Protest

College of
Arts and Sciences



SKYE LEEDAHL

Each week the popular television series "This is Us" invites viewers to watch the celebrations, trials, and tragedies of the Pearson family. The show depicts a 40-year period, toggling between different stages along the family's timeline and allowing viewers to witness the ways in which family experiences and relationships shape the adults we become. This unique glimpse into the impact of family across the life span is entertaining, but more importantly, serves as the focal point for HDF 130G: *"This is Us": Individual and Family Development*. Professor Skye Leedah's goal in designing this course was not only to introduce students to the Human Development and Family Studies major, but to provide students an opportunity to explore how our early family experiences shape who we are. Through course readings and this perfectly curated television show, students examine contemporary family issues such as mental health, sexuality, and white privilege. Professor Leedah explains that "family life is filled with difficult decisions that are never just right or wrong – the ethical aspect is what makes family so challenging to navigate." In weekly application assignments, students are asked to recognize the influences and consequences of the interactions portrayed on the show and use this to reflect on their own family experiences and self-identity. For Professor Leedah, the course is about helping students realize the complexity of family so they can gain a better understanding of their own.

HDF 130G
"This is Us":
Individual and Family
Development

College of
Health Sciences



CHRISTINE MOK

"What do I do?" is the big question many students have as they grapple with issues of race and racism in ENG 450G: *Performing Race*. This interdisciplinary course intertwines anthropology, sociology, literature, and cultural studies to examine the performance of race. Professor Christine Mok explains, "My initial impulse was to create a course full of the things I didn't learn in school, so the course is driven by students' questions rather than a set of answers." To that end, every class is an experiment, focused on keeping questions alive and relevant for each generation and recognizing the shift that is created by the cultural, political, and societal issues of the time. As a 400-level capstone, the course begins by creating a shared understanding of theory, vocabulary, and historical knowledge through a crash course in Critical Race Theory. Students then spend time unpacking historical case studies anchored in a play or performance art. Lastly, students work to create their own performance and engage with each other's work which might include a pamphlet, campus walk about, or even a one-act play. This learning experience pushes students to recognize their own agency and embrace the individual power they hold within our layered institutional and societal framework. For Professor Mok, providing students a place to explore and rehearse their ability "to do" is the ultimate goal and watching students teach and learn from each other is the most rewarding.

ENG 450G
Performing Race

College of
Arts and Sciences