INTRODUCTION

Welcome to "Brains of Genius," the summer version of "Exploring the Nature of Genius," or the "Genius Course" as it has been known around Yale. I and my friend TA Jakub Koguciuk (we worked together last summer) will be leading what I think you will come to find is an exciting and intellectually stimulating experience.

But fun as this will be, let the student beware: Summer Term comes at you fast--our mandate is to provide the same content in five weeks that we usually provide over a semester of twelve. So please be prepared to work hard and get off to a strong start, as I'm sure you will.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The term “genius” is often used, indeed overused. But does “genius” even exist, and, if so, how can we recognize, perhaps even measure it? “Brains of Genius” begins with a brief introduction to the changing meanings of the term, from the ancient Greeks down to the present day. Immediately, we will confront two important questions: why no female geniuses and no Asian geniuses? Is genius an absolute that has the same values for all cultures or is it relative to particular cultures at a given moment in time? Intentionally provocative, these questions will force us to consider gender (especially through the words of Virginia Woolf), race, and ultimately culture in fashioning a definition, even a stereotype, of “the genius.” The next few weeks will allow us to establish modes of analysis for genius by examining the lives and working methods of several exceptional individuals: Leonardo da Vinci, Newton, Mozart, van Gogh, and Picasso, Einstein, Curie, Tesla, Warhol, and Lady Gaga among others. Issues such as nature vs. nurture, hard work vs. IQ, relaxation and sleep, concentration and memory, curiosity and expansive thinking, and the neuroscience of creativity will be explored so as to identify the drivers, or enablers, of genius. In a final paper, you will be asked to consider what makes genius and how a genius of your choice demonstrates that. Ultimately, while taking this course likely will not make you a genius, it will change the way you view your life, raise your children (natural or adopted), select your and their schools, and vote in democratic elections. You will have to make a choice with your life: do you want to be a success or do you want to be a genius?
EXPECTATIONS, REQUIREMENTS, & MATERIALS

You will attend a live class everyday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11:00 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. EDT. Videos with questions will be posted before each class. It is expected that you will view the videos and respond to a series of questions (and submit your responses) by 9:00 a.m. the day of each class. In addition, for each class, you will be asked to read two or three articles, essays, or papers. Each reading will be accompanied, again, by a series of questions, that are intended to lead you through the reading, emphasizing what your instructor thinks is important. (There is no textbook for the course; all readings will be posted as PDFs or Word documents.) We will begin each class (except the first) with a five-minute graded quiz on the reading, to assure that we are all together. Questions on the quiz will be drawn from aforementioned series of questions.

ASSESSMENT

The student’s grade (based on a point score or 200) will be determined by 1) answers to question for pre-class videos (15 points); 2) approximately 14 quizzes on the assigned readings that will be given at the beginning of each class (55 points), 3) class attendance and participation (15 points) 4) five papers of increasing length: 500, 600, 700, 800, and 2,400 words (10 points, 15, points, 20, points, 25 points, 45 points)

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD DO BEFORE FIRST CLASS

Watch posted video material and send in answers to the posted questions inherent in the video.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD DO BEFORE ALL OTHER CLASSES

1) Watch posted video material and send in answers to the posted questions inherent in the video, and 2) Read assigned articles following posted questions on that reading, and come to class prepared to take a 5-minute quiz on that reading. All questions on the quizzes will be drawn from those of the question sheet.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING LIVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS

The live discussion sessions will be held through the Zoom virtual classroom tool. To access the live sessions, click "Modules" on the left side of this page. Under the "Home" module, locate "Prof. Wright's Meeting Room" page, and open the page in a new tab. Once you click the link, you will be prompted to install a small application necessary for Zoom. Once you do so, you will be taken directly into the Zoom meeting room. You can then use the audio and video settings menu (bottom left corner) to ensure the correct input/output sources are chosen. For more detailed information of Zoom operation, refer to the user guide in the Technical Support page in the "Modules" tab of the upper left column. Remember: a headset with microphone is recommended in the live sessions, this will help reduce audio feedback from participants. Additionally, be sure you are in a quiet location for the live sessions allowing you to focus on the discussion.
CLASS SCHEDULE

(Specific readings will be posted for each class, starting June 17, 2020 – schedule is subject to change, the newest version will be always available on Canvas)

FORMAT: The class will meet live Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:00 a.m. until 12:15p.m. Eastern U.S. Time. Attendance is mandatory at all sessions. Students are responsible for their own connectivity. We understand that you may be traveling during this course, so be sure to check ahead for reliable Internet access--again, connectivity is your responsibility.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

July 1: Whose Genius? Race, Gender, Culture and the Notion of Genius
Paper 1 assigned: What is Genius?
July 3: Nature or Nurture: Gift or Hard Work: IQ or Many Q's

WEEK 2: LEONARDO AND NEWTON

Paper 1 due: July 6, 11:00 a.m.
July 6: Leonardo da Vinci: Which is Better? Going a Mile Wide or a Mile Deep?
July 8: Leonardo da Vinci and Steve Jobs: Combinative Thinking
Paper 2 assigned: Leonardo and Newton and What Makes Genius
July 10: Issac Newton: Science and the Moment of Insight

WEEK 3: THE CREATIVE MIND

Paper 2 due: July 13 at 11:00 a.m.
July 13: Einstein and the Visual Imagination: Einstein's Brain & Thought Process
July 15: Freud and the Unconscious; Relaxation; Theories of Creativity
July 17: Creativity as Imaged and Explained by Neuroscience
Paper 3 assigned: What is Creativity and How Does It Happen?

WEEK 4: MOZART AND FRIENDS

Paper 3 due: July 20 at 11:00 a.m.
July 20: Mozart and the Prodigy: Is the Prodigy a Genius?
July 22: More Mozart: Thinking outside the Box and Childlike Thinking
Paper 4 assigned: Mozart and Genius

July 24: Van Gogh and Frieda Kahlo: Disability and Madness: Disability and Perseverance

WEEK 5: GENIUS AND SOCIETY

Paper 4 due: July 27 at 11:00 a.m.

July 27: Picasso: The Genius as Monster

Paper 5 (final paper) assigned

July 29: Edison vs. Tesla: Inventor or Scientist--Who's the Genius

July 31: Genius or Success: Which Do you Want to Be? Genius and the School System; SAT and ACT Tests Gifted Programs Asian Students vs. Harvard

August 2: 11:50 p.m. Final paper due

MATERIALS & REQUIREMENTS:

Videos with questions will be posted before each class. Readings will be posted (as PDFs or Word documents) with questions before each class. Students are required to submit written answers to questions by 9:00 a.m. Eastern U.S. Time on the morning of each class. The student work product will consist of (and grades will be determined by): 1) answers to preassigned videos and readings, 2) scores on daily in-class quizzes, 3) participation in live class discussion, 4) five papers of increasing length (500, 600, 700, 800, 2,400 words).