

UHON 302-010 | T | 12:30-3:00 | SHC 9 | 43625
Fulfills A&S Group V: Humanities
Margo Chávez-Charles

"We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself." With these words comes a perspective of human existence that is not limited to any particular region of this small planet we call Earth, nor to any particular group of its inhabitants; we humans, no matter where we live or how we think, are in every way a part of this Universe.

It seems that through our cultural and biological evolution, we are as a species steadily approaching this "Cosmic Perspective," though not quite through the mind of every individual. Yet there have always been those among us who actively seek to spread this awareness; those who look up at the night sky and feel the beauty of the universe, the wonder of existence.

Perhaps this is why all societies develop a Cosmology, an understanding of the visible universe founded upon their understanding of themselves and cultivated by their individual observations and contemplations. Our modern scientific Cosmology is the same, though some of those who study it tend to forget the human aspect. But the internal and external "universes" are not separate; what happens within our minds is a reflection of physical nature through which the matter of the Cosmos perceives its own existence. This is a fundamental truth.

In this manner, we will voyage through the realms of astrophysical thought and examine the fractal boundaries they share with other realms. We will accompany a host of protons on their quest for consciousness and witness how they finally attain it through the power of stellar alchemy. We will gaze into the depths of the Cosmic Ocean, only to find that it flows deep within us; when we look outward we will see inward.

You do not need to have an understanding of physical phenomena or any knowledge of mathematics or astronomy to join us in our travels, but openness to that which you do not comprehend is a great thing to have on any voyage of the mind.

Our guide in these explorations will be Dr. Carl Sagan, one who has traveled this way many times before (as will be seen, so have we), and he will take us on the path that leads to the truth we already know. It will reveal its presence throughout our journey to those who can see, and will give eyes to those who cannot but are willing to look. In the end, we will return to where we began and complete a fractal cycle: We are the universe conscious of itself.

Readings

Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*

Selected articles placed on e-reserve or in a reader to be purchased from the Honors office

Requirements

Regular attendance, active participation in class discussion, engaged listening. Weekly response/presentation based on reading. Final project or research paper.

About the Instructor

Margo Chávez-Charles holds a B.A. in English from NMSU, an M.A. in Teaching English as a Second Language and Teaching French from the School for International Training in Vermont, and an M.A. in Liberal Education from St. John's College. Her special interests include literature, interdisciplinary education, intercultural communication, and the history of ideas. One of the favorite courses she has taught in Honors was "Science Meets Literature." In addition to her teaching, she also regularly works for the CONEXIONES programs in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Spain.

About the Student Teacher

At the University of New Mexico, Jaksza Osinski studies Astrophysics, currently working toward the B.S. degree. But when not engaged in this particular manner of Thought, you may see him wandering about gathering sticks for wood-creatures; or drawing on the ground with stones, binding forms that flow throughout the surface we walk on.