

Pathways at CMU

A Pathway is a set of three to four courses on related themes, ideas, content, or methodologies. Pathways present opportunities for faculty and students across disciplines and majors to work together on the “big questions”, and to think in creative and new ways about them. Students taking all or some of the courses of a Pathway have the opportunity to explore resonant issues in all their real complexity, from multiple vantage points.

Pathways are scheduled so students can take all of the courses of a Pathway without conflicts among its courses.

We invite you to follow one of our Pathways this year!

The Meaning of “Life”: Biology and its Implications

“There is a world of difference between already knowing something and seeing what it implies,” wrote the philosopher Brian Garvey in his 2007 book, *Philosophy of Biology*. Since the mid-19th century there has been an explosion of knowledge in the life sciences, encompassing both the molecular scale of genes and how they work, and the macroscopic scale of ecosystems, interactions and our shared evolutionary history. This knowledge has profound implications for how we understand humanity and our relationship to the rest of creation, and also for our ability to shape ourselves and our world. Thoroughly exploring the interface between biology and philosophy is a lifetime’s work, but the courses in this pathway will introduce students to the roots of modern biological understanding, and some of the questions it raises.

Courses:

BIOL-1010 The Evolutionary and Ecological Revolution

BIOL-1020 The Genetic Revolution

PHIL-1020 The Task of Philosophy II – The Question of Knowledge

PHIL-2950 Topics in Philosophy – Philosophy of Biology

Tragedy, Hope, and the City

Through an engagement with materials both ancient and contemporary, the courses in this pathway set out to explore these complicated dynamics of tragedy and hope in the context of the challenges of civic life, culture, and institutions. The idea for this pathway arises out of themes present in the critically acclaimed series *The Wire*. The show’s creators suggest that it should be viewed as sort of Greek tragedy. It presents us with stories of “doomed and fated protagonists who confront a rigged game and their own mortality.” Instead of the gods we find in Greek tragedy, however, *The Wire* is a tragedy in which people find themselves stymied by institutions such as the police, the drug trade, democratic politics, the school system, and the media, especially as they exist in their “postmodern” form in a world of “untethered capitalism run amok.” And yet, while they have little use for cheap and easy hope, they nevertheless insist that the show is not altogether without hope. *The Wire* is ultimately a love letter to a broken form of city life which refuses to believe that cities and those who dwell within must be crushed by the institutions and other forces that so often destroy them.

Courses:

ENGL-1030 Classical Literature

PCTS-3120 Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace

PHIL/BTS/SOCI-3950 Topics in Philosophy – The City and the Wire

PHIL/BTS-3950 Topics in Philosophy – The City and the Soul: Augustine’s City of God

SOCI-3950 Topics in Sociology – Ilich

Resilience and the Modern

Resilience might be described as the capacity of a complex system (be it an individual, an ecosystem, a community, or an economy) to deal with change and continue to evolve. According to the [Stockholm Resilience Centre](#), “it is about how humans and nature can use shocks and disturbances... to spur renewal and innovative thinking.” In this pathway, you’ll have the opportunity to become a “systems thinker” by examining your own relationship to social-ecological

systems. How can we cultivate opportunities within systems to effectively address the various challenges facing us as inheritors of modernity's legacy?

Courses

BIOL-1010 The Evolutionary and Ecological Revolution

BUSI/POLS-2500 Social Entrepreneurship

ENVS/GEOG/IDS-3010 Environment Society Resilience

PSYC-3600 Trauma and Resilience

PSYC-3950 Topics in Psychology – Positive Psychology

Urban Ecologies and Anthropologies

How might we conceive the city and engage with it in all its complexity? This pathway takes its inspiration from the TV show *The Wire*, a drama which is not finally about particular citizens or civic issues but rather one in which the city itself is featured as the main character. Building on an examination of the way *The Wire* treats the city of Baltimore, this pathway veers to consider the character of the city of Winnipeg, focusing especially on the aspects of ecology, economics, and music.

Courses

BIOL-3580 Quantitative Methods in Biology

MUSC-2950 Topics in Music – Music and Locality

PHIL/BTS/SOCI-3950 Topics in Philosophy – The City and the Wire

SOCI-2000 Social Welfare