

HOLYOKE

Free classes expand options at HCC

Holyoke Community College student Nicole Perry knew she was in for a challenging semester when she signed up for “The Tranquil(ized) Fifties: Consensus and Dissensus in Mid-Century America.”

It was her second Learning Community, a special HCC class that combines two academic subjects focused on a single theme.

“The Tranquil(ized) Fifties” was an honors course offered in the fall exploring conformity and conflict in the 1950s through the study of literature, fine art and mass entertainment from that decade.

Part of an HCC-Smith College partnership, the class was taught jointly by an HCC art professor and a Smith College English professor and met in Northampton at Smith, often in the Smith College Museum of Art, where the students – had access to teaching galleries closed to the general public.

“I really loved this class,” Perry, a Hadley resident,

said in December. “It was a ton of reading and work but I learned so much. I am currently applying to Smith and Mount Holyoke College for transfer, so actually the course load has helped me feel prepared about what I should expect and confident that I can handle it.”

Those were the benefits. The cost? Free.

“The Tranquil(ized) Fifties” is just one in a series of inter-institutional Learning Communities being offered for free to HCC students thanks to a \$100,000 grant the college received in 2017 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 2018, the first full year of the grant, HCC offered free and half-price Learning Communities with Smith, Amherst College and Tangshan University in China.

For the spring 2019 semester, which begins Monday, HCC is offering free Learning Community courses together with Bay Path University, Mount Holyoke College and

Hebei University of Science and Technology in China.

Because Learning Community counts as two courses, students earn six credits, rather than the usual three, and can save as much as \$1,000 in tuition and fees for the semester if they sign up for the free ones.

“This is extraordinary, offering free classes to study at Smith, Mount Holyoke, Amherst or Bay Path,” said professor Jim Dutcher, one of the coordinators of HCC’s Learning Community program. “What an amazing experience for our students.”

The free Learning Community classes being taught this spring include “If you don’t have the stories: Native American History and Literature,” a history and world literature course taught by professor Patricia Kennedy at HCC and professor John Jarvis at Bay Path; “Aliens, Anti-Citizens and Identity,” a philosophy and Latino Studies class taught by Donald Hanover at HCC and David Hernan-

dez at Mount Holyoke; and “Journey,” a humanities and English composition course taught by Dutcher and Xian Liu from HCC together, remotely, with instructors and their students from Hebring University in China.

“Journey” is not a class about China,” Dutcher said. “We’re partnering with China. China is there. Journey is the theme, so we look at different aspects of journey – road trips, internal trips, all kinds of trips.”

Every semester, HCC offers about a dozen of these Learning Communities. The college has the oldest Learning Community program in the state and is still one of only a handful of public or private colleges in the state that offers them. Inter-institutional Learning Communities are uncommon, but not at HCC.

“These inter-institutional LCs create a kind of natural transfer pathway for our students,” said HCC professor and Learning Community program coordinator

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Jim Dutcher, professor

Jack Mino. “They get direct classroom experience with a faculty member from another institution and they gain exposure to another campus and get to experience academic life somewhere else. That’s something invaluable.”

Perry agrees. “The Tranquil(ized) Fifties” has turned out to be her favorite class so far at HCC.

“I really love the idea of learning a topic through two different disciplines,” she said. “An added bonus was seeing some incredible artwork. I would highly recommend this LC and LCs in general. It was a great experience.”