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# Honors Program presents lecture series to 'Celebrate the Liberal Arts'

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**Nabil Matar (left) and Dennis Thompson.**

The USF St. Petersburg Honors Program is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a special lecture series that reflects the theme of the anniversary, "Celebrate the Liberal Arts."

Dennis Thompson, Ph.D., the Alfred North Whitehead Professor of Political Philosophy Emeritus at [Harvard University](#), will discuss "Science, Ethics and Democracy" on Thursday, Jan. 23, at 4 p.m. at the University Student Center Ballroom. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Nabil Matar, Ph.D., the Presidential Professor of Arts & Humanities at the [University of Minnesota](#), will discuss "The Arabic Legacy in Western Thought" on Monday, March 3 at 3:30 p.m. at the University Student Center Ballroom. The lecture is free and open to the public.

"The liberal arts are at the core of the Honors Program but there is a lot of confusion about what that means," said Thomas Smith, Ph.D., Honors Program director and associate professor of government and international affairs. "The liberal arts are about developing critical thinking and fostering our capacities for reason, judgment and scientific inquiry. They provide the intellectual tools to be engaged citizens."

Both speakers will discuss issues that go to the heart of what the liberal arts are all about, Smith said.

Thompson, the author of eight books and founding director of the Harvard University Center for Ethics, will underscore the importance for scientists to understand the ethical implications of their work. Matar will explore the transmission of ideas from the Arab world into western thought.

“This spring lecture series underscores an important part of the mission of the Honors Program at USF St. Petersburg,” said Frank Biafora, Ph.D., dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “It brings together nationally recognized thought leaders discussing provocative topics that will both challenge and enlighten our students and the public.”

The Honors Program will also present the Second Annual St. Petersburg Conference on International Affairs Feb. 13-15 at the University Student Center Ballroom. The conference, featuring 15 panels of distinguished experts from across the country discussing the critical international issues of the day, is free and open to the public.

Complimentary parking for the Honors Program events will be available at the USFSP parking garage, 260 5th Ave S, St Petersburg. For more information about these events please call (727) 873-4872.

The Honors Program offers academically gifted, highly motivated students an exciting and diverse college experience that enhances their undergraduate education. This year, about 100 students comprise a thriving, close-knit, diverse academic community. Students receive individual attention from a distinguished faculty in small, seminar-style classes. [Read more about the Honors Program.](#)

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