

KUNG FU

Over the last nine years, one of the most popular, recurring seminars in the Honors College is The Word: Culture & Society Kung Fu San Soo. This seminar, taught by Marty Reeder and Rebecca Lewis, accommodates 14-16 students each fall semester in the Reeder's Kung Fu School, located at 927 Sam Houston Ave.

The focus of the course is on physical fitness and health, mental fortitude, clarity, and relaxation. Kung Fu San Soo emphasizes the understanding that your body is a fortress ready for daily challenges and able to deter the need for self-defense situation, but capable and ready to survive a self-defense situation if one arises. If the mind and body are prepared, one is more likely to avoid such a thing by being aware, confident, and capable.

"The impact is significant to everyday life, every minute, every second; you will have peace and confidence in how you study, how you drive, how you treat others and how you treat yourself," Reeder said. "You will find serenity in the training, preparing for battle while staying as far away from it as possible. It is better to be a warrior in a garden than a gardener in a war."

The course teaches traditional Kung Fu San Soo as it was taught in the monasteries of ancient China. Students learn exercises, fighting skills through forms and drills and intermediate self-defense strategy and technique. Upon completion at the semester, students earn their first belt in the ancient self-defense art.

Reeder developed a curriculum for earning a Yellow Belt in Kung Fu (based on his mentor's teachings and historical methods) that is used for this course. However, since the Honors seminar is an accelerated version (15 weeks instead of 6 months) and because it is done for college credit, written assignments were added to the regular Yellow Belt study (which is based purely on physical performance). Each week, students write a journal entry on what they have learned about Kung Fu techniques, history and philosophy. They also have two larger papers to write – a Kung Fu movie review at mid-term and a final paper summarizing everything they have learned in the semester. There are four physical exams throughout the semester where students demonstrate the forms, drills and lessons they have learned.

While Honors students are required to take two seminars, students choose to take Kung Fu and are genuinely interested in learning.

"KUNG FU SAN SOO HAS TAUGHT ME THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IN EVERY SITUATION."

"No student signs up for this course thinking it will be an easy way to earn their Honors credit, and there is no faking it until you make it. Students are out there, proving their knowledge on the mat, in full display," Lewis said.



Most students begin the course with a little trepidation and a lot of curiosity and leave with a new set of skills and improved physical and mental fitness. For the instructors, seeing the confidence and enjoyment on students' faces is incredibly rewarding.

Reeder, a former Honors student, is proud to give back to Sam Houston State. He began working with Honors in 2016. At that point, he taught once a semester as part of the Journeys seminar. The popularity of the class led to the creation of the current semester-long course. When asked if they would continue teaching this course, Reeder and Lewis both responded with a resounding "Yes!" Reeder shared that teaching this course is his favorite time of the year, and he hopes to continue.

In the future, he would like to extend the course and teach upper-level sections every semester to watch the students grow in confidence and the art of Kung Fu San Soo. Completion of a four-year course would help students earn their Black Belt.

