

## 2015-16 USIE Spring Seminars

### **ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES 88S**

Title: Francophone Vietnam: Literature and Film

Student Facilitator: Jason Hong

Faculty Mentor: Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo

Description:

Although Vietnam was once a French-speaking country because of its history under French colonial rule, its francophone past has mostly been overshadowed by the American involvement in the Vietnam War.

The goal of this course is to thus paint students another portrait of Vietnam by way of literature and film. The first half of the course will interrogate embodiments of Vietnam's colonial history, beginning with French intrusions into the country and ending with its independence from France. The second half will then take a look at its more recent, postcolonial history, mainly by studying diaspora and immigration through the works of exilic writers residing in France and Quebec. Major questions include: How does one negotiate identity between two languages and histories, Vietnamese and French? What transnational spaces have developed between Vietnam and France?

All readings and films will be in English (translation and subtitles). No knowledge of French is required.

### **CHEMISTRY 88S**

Title: From Smartphones to Diamonds, The Versatility of Inorganic Carbon

Student Facilitator: Winn Huynh

Faculty Mentor: Richard Kaner

Description:

This course will provide an introduction to compounds containing only carbon, particularly diamond, graphite, graphene, carbon nanotubes and carbon fibers. There will be many opportunities participate in hands-on demos, interact with science literature and give a presentation on an inorganic carbon topic. Opportunities to learn from each other and by pursuing independent or group projects will also be provided. Come to class prepared each week, actively participate in class discussions, and strengthen your presentation skills—all while building knowledge in the practical applications of carbon technologies.

### **COMMUNICATION STUDIES 88S**

Title: Survey of Political Repression: How the State Conveys its Message

Student Facilitator: Albert Sarian

Faculty Mentor: Paul Von Blum

Description:

This course will use a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the various examples throughout US history. It will examine the social, political and economic implications of these repressive episodes and how the state conveyed its message. This course will provide a historical overview and an in-depth examination of selected major highlights of domestic political repression. This class will use an array of primary and secondary sources, in addition to documentaries to give students a holistic understanding of the events.

### **EDUCATION 88S**

Title: Access, Agitation, and Litigation: The State of Affirmative Action in United States Colleges

Student Facilitator: Arthur Wang

Faculty Mentor: Robert Teranishi

Description:

Affirmative action as it pertains to university campuses has become a discussion defined by partisan entrenchment and a bitter, decades-long, debate. Incorporating sociology, educational studies, legal theory, and more, this course is a thorough and multidisciplinary exploration of affirmative action's history, rationale, and implementation in the United States, with particular foci on current events, where Asian Americans fit into the debate, and the uncertain future of the policy. Seeks to facilitate the development of informed, critical, and complex opinions of a controversial social policy through weekly discussions prefaced by brief background explanations. Students will evaluate fundamental questions pertinent to the policy, such as "does race matter in colleges?" and "is affirmative action discriminatory?," while also conducting critical investigations of why these questions are being asked in the first place.

### **ENGLISH 88SA**

Title: The Rise of the Anti-Hero

Student Facilitator: Sarah Abolail

Faculty Mentor: Mitchum Huehls

Description:

From Walter White to Tony Soprano, the Golden Age of television is built around a rise in the narratives of anti-heroes. Why is this rise of the anti-hero significant to our contemporary moment? What do anti-heroes tell us about the contemporary anxiety with time, history, capitalism, and violence? How does identifying or connecting to immoral characters complicate our sense of responsibility? This course uses anti-heroes as the lens for investigating and complicating all of these questions. We will focus on developing analytical and close reading skills using a variety of mediums, including visual texts. We will begin by looking at historical anti-hero figures such as Shakespeare's Macbeth, and move to contemporary television and film antiheroes such as Taylor Derden from "Fight Club," Anthony Soprano from "Sopranos" and Walter White from "Breaking Bad."

### **ENGLISH 88SB**

Title: Don't Panic!: A Student's Guide to Humor in Science Fiction

Student Facilitator: Ariel Reider

Faculty Mentor: Ursula Heise

Description:

Science fiction has vastly expanded in scope and variety since the 1960s—and until recently, it's rarely been funny. Over the last few decades, humor has increasingly come to form part of science fiction. What makes adding humor to science fiction such a prominent phenomenon? What purpose do creators have behind mixing the comic and the scientifically imaginative? In other words, why is funny sci-fi so darn popular?

This course will consider these questions by looking at works that unite humor and science fiction. We will examine works from a variety of media, not only text but film, cartoon, and music, and from authors and creators such as Douglas Adams, Rebecca Sugar, David Willis, the

Marvel Cinematic Universe, and more. Students will discuss how, where, and why these works included humor, as well as whether that humor worked. Students should leave this course with an understanding of humor, science fiction, and the ways in which these two elements interact with each other, as well as with other genres, such as fantasy or magical realism.

### **ENGLISH 88SD**

Title: Young, Wild, and Free: Themes and Topics in Young Adult Literature

Student Facilitator: Dorothy Yim

Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

Description:

This course is an exploration in the themes of young adult literature and how it relates to the everyday lives of adolescents. Through class discussion and weekly writing assignments, we will discuss how the characters in the model novel, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, respond to topics such as categorization, identity, and sacrifice."

### **ENVIRONMENT 88S**

Title: Wet and Wild World of Water: How Water in Los Angeles Circulates Through the Human Experience

Student Facilitator: Denita Toneva

Faculty Mentor: Cully Nordby

Description:

Most people don't think twice about where their water comes from or where it ends up once it falls into the drain or outside. This course will be an interactive exploration of water in Los Angeles and how it is intertwined into our lives. Through in-class activities and outdoor field trips to various waterways in LA, students will learn about the holistic cycle of water movement from the source to homes to the ocean where everything eventually ends up. This will be an opportunity to delve into the anthropogenic effects of urbanization and pollution on our waterways and how that comes back to us, as well as possible solutions and mitigation efforts.

Although we may not always see the effects we have on the environment, everything we do in LA can impact important natural resources that we need for our own survival. By examining the issues and providing strategies to help mitigate problems, this course will empower students to make a difference in the city we call home in ways that benefit both people and the environment.

### **HISTORY 88SA**

Title: "To Pimp a Butterfly": Cultural Evolution of Black Los Angeles

Student Facilitator: Rakeidra Davis-Hudson

Faculty Mentor: Mary Corey

Description:

This course divulges a critical examination of community issues socially, culturally, economically, and politically, through artistic liberation: Hip-Hop. We will examine the Black Musical up rise through the exploration of Kendrick Lamar's latest album, "To Pimp A Butterfly." We will trace the history of Black Los Angeles, as it becomes the cultural and intellectual climate, of which the revolution emerges. In this course we will study both the rise of hip-hop in Southern California and the historical context in which that significant cultural movement developed. This course is a creative analysis of dichotomy of black culture in America.

**HISTORY 88SB**

Title: Chocolate: A Cultural Commodity

Student Facilitator: Madeleine Gregory

Faculty Mentor: Robin Derby

Description:

Exploration of cacao and chocolate in an international context from Mesoamerican origins to the present, with special consideration of surrounding social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances. The first half of the course will focus on the historical transformation of cacao into chocolate and its parallels to larger trends, focusing on the cultural exchange between Europeans and Americans. The second half of the course will examine its recent history, analyzing the influence of past events on current concerns in the industry, such as fair trade, labor, and the imminent chocolate shortage. Designed for majors and non-majors.

**INFORMATION STUDIES 88S**

Title: Digital Narratives: How to Counter the Mainstream Narrative Online

Student Facilitator: Hannah Diaz

Faculty Mentor: Safiya Noble

Description:

My seminar will provoke discussion on the intersection of technology, power, and identity. While it is very easy to assume that the Internet is a democratizing tool, there is evidence that suggests that this is not the case. Instead, money, access, skills, isolation, identity, and stereotypes play a significant role in who creates information and whom information is created for online. We will look at different studies about the digital divide and its continued existence around the world, but especially in America. Moreover, we will talk about what “digital cosmopolitans” are and the problems that arise when we tend to seek out communities of like-minded people, seeking only to re-affirm our already biased opinions. We will explore who is “digitally exiled,” whether or not “digital ghettos” exist, and how this manifests as power in society through readings, videos, and worksheets. We will talk about how to decipher, describe, and deconstruct the mainstream narrative online. By the end of the class, each individual should be able to express their knowledge of how technology has or hasn’t changed power and privilege in America. Lastly, my seminar will discuss counter-narratives and public programs as a possible solution to these problems.

**MATHEMATICS 88S**

Title: Mathematics & Movies

Student Facilitator: Ruth Dolly Johnson

Faculty Mentor: Spencer Unger

Description:

Mathematics can often be mired in long computations and abstract concepts, but the field of mathematics offers so many areas of exploration that are both understandable and interesting to everyone. Students will use movies as a framework of understanding for various topics in mathematics, such as game theory, topology, cryptography, and more. The goal is to demonstrate how the abstract concepts can indeed be described in all situations, as demonstrated in the chosen movies. Designed for both majors and non-majors; course only requires basic understanding of high school mathematics.

**MUSIC HISTORY 88SA**

Title: Understanding Franz Liszt, The First Rock Star

Student Facilitator: Beniko Hirosawa-Bates

Faculty Mentor: Raymond Knapp

Description:

This seminar aims to improve students' understanding of music history in relation to today's world. By imagining Franz Liszt as a model for the contemporary iconic figure of a rock star, students are encouraged to diagnose and identify similarities or differences between cultures and the development of societies. By the studying the culture of the Romantic era and comparing it to current experiences, students will be brought closer to the subject matter.

**MUSIC HISTORY 88SB**

Title: There Will Be Light: Musicals and Disabilities

Student Facilitator: Richard Tucker

Faculty Mentor: Raymond Knapp

Description:

Musical Theatre aims to solve a problem while bringing the audience along for the journey. Typically, at the closing of the final number in a musical, the problem is either resolved or is left for the audience member to assume the best or worst has happened. Similarly, society views disability as a problem, something that needs to be fixed. Yet, some may argue that disabilities should not be seen as a problem, but as a part of one's identity – not needing to be fixed. When applying these social norms to the art of musical theatre one may ask how disability is represented within musical theatre, a live art form. This course surveys and explores the representation of disability in: Sweeney Todd, Rent, and Next to Normal. The course will question how representing disability in a musical, whether positive or negative, can deepen the plot of the musical. This seminar is designed for both majors and non-majors and previous knowledge in music history, theatre, or disability studies is not required.

**NEUROSCIENCE 88S**

Title: This Is Your Brain On Music

Student Facilitator: Tyler Toueg

Faculty Mentor: Ellen Carpenter

Description:

Music has existed since the beginning of recorded history and plays a critical role all of our lives in some way. Whether it's listening to music when we are relaxing, studying or exercising, we have all had the experience of music influencing our emotions and behavior in some way.

In this class, we will be looking at the science behind the relationship between music and the brain and why music makes us feel and act the way that we do. We will start from the basics of describing what music. We will go on to explain the scientific basis behind how both playing and listening to music physically and emotionally impacts us. Then we will look at how people with certain mental conditions process music differently. Finally, we will also look at the applications for music as a therapeutic tool for treating mental disorders in cases where pharmaceutical drugs fall short.

### **PHILOSOPHY 88SA**

Title: Thinking On Your Feet: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sport

Student Facilitator: Benjamin Genta

Faculty Mentor: Calvin Normore

Description:

Whether it be watching a Friday night football game, passing by an advertisement with a professional golf player, or overhearing a group of people talking about a recent soccer game, sports continuously surround our everyday lives. This class will explore questions that make up the essence of sport: what is it, and how is it different from a game? Why do humans engage in this activity? Is there a moral code within sports? By exploring these questions, among many others, through a philosophical lens, students will gain a new out-look on what seems like such a familiar activity.

### **PHILOSOPHY 88SB**

Title: The Philosophy and Neuroscience of Free Will

Student Facilitator: Eden Sayed

Faculty Mentor: Calvin Normore

Description:

Do we have free will? What does it mean to have free will and how could it be realized in the nervous system? In this course we will utilize tools from analytic philosophy, computational neuroscience, and experimental neuroscience and psychology to investigate the problem of free will. We will examine the conceptual relationship of indeterminacy, determinacy, and randomness to our freedom of the will. We will also study the computational and neurophysiological work on decision making, as well as the behavioral work on the sense of agency (e.g the Libet Experiment), and evaluate their relevance to the free will debate.

### **PSYCHOLOGY 88SA**

Title: Mind Over Health Matter: The Social Psychology Behind Modern Health Controversies

Student Facilitator: Jasmine Jafari

Faculty Mentor: Carlos Grijalva

Description:

This seminar is intended to help students recognize the psychological phenomena behind common western health culture, concepts, practices, and beliefs in order to understand and discuss these topics constructively and mindfully.

Students are constantly exposed to a barrage of health-related topics and debates through the news, our families, and social networks; however, we often encounter limited perspectives such that we either nod in full agreement or dismiss contrary opinions as invalid. Sensationalized or not, debates over popular health topics have massive repercussions at both the immediate (family and friends) and global level (lobbying and law). This seminar aims to address and depolarize these various health controversies and tackle them head on through education and friendly discussion.

Our discussion will address the psychology behind people's health beliefs and values, by deconstructing multiple perspectives into the core motivational factors contributing to them, and focusing on one health-related phenomenon, controversy, or topic each week.

**PSYCHOLOGY 88SB**

Title: Mind Games: Psychology Behind Controls

Student Facilitator: Becky Li

Faculty Mentor: Jesse Rissman

Description:

Since the days of Tennis for Two, video games have evolved to become a beloved part of our lives. They have infiltrated our peace with common household names from Mario and Luigi to Grand Theft Auto. Despite being constrained to a digital screen, video games have real life consequences. Do video games increase violent tendencies, as suggested by countless newspaper articles? Does gender and/or sex have an effect on video game performance? Do video games have a promising future in classrooms? With video games becoming an integral part of our lives and with their influence continuing to grow, it is important to assess their effect on different areas of our psychology. This course hopes to address the aforementioned topics from a psychological perspective with support from scholarly journal articles and news stories. This ten-week seminar welcomes both avid video game fans and simply curious minds. No prior knowledge necessary. Press START to continue.

**PSYCHOLOGY 88SC**

Title: The Big Happy Picture: Exploring Perspectives of Happiness

Student Facilitator: Luis Mendez

Faculty Mentor: Gerardo Ramirez

Description:

Happiness is a current phenomenon that is yet to be fully understood. Our lives are filled with moments of sadness and those of happiness. Researchers have been interested in the differences between those two, from how the feeling was derived to the current state of emotion. The U.S. being one of the countries known to be better off in this world, suffers with millions of Americans having difficulty to find happiness in their lives. This often brings a lot of curiosity to psychologists, researchers, and others like myself. This course will not be a “How to be Happy in 3 easy steps” therapeutic session. However, the goal of this course is for students to leave class everyday knowing a little more about happiness from a different perspective. This can be from a sociological perspective on how people from a certain social group find happiness in their life compared to a different social group. Giving a kid from a low resource tribe something to eat will make the kid happy as opposed to a privileged kid who will throw a tantrum for having to eat their vegetables. Happiness will be seen over a chronological perspective in which we go over how the way people acquire the state of happiness has changed over time, with an emphasis on technology and goods. Who will be more satisfied with their jeans, someone in the 1980s who bought their average blue jeans or someone today who bought theirs at a Levis store?

### **SOCIETY AND GENETICS 88SA**

Title: Inconsistent Dichotomies: Examining the Sex/Gender Binary

Student Facilitator: Mariah Kolbe

Faculty Mentor: Patrick Allard

Description:

Interdisciplinary look into the strengths and weaknesses of the sex/gender binary. The biology of sexual development will be examined concurrently with the sociological effects of using a binary system to categorize humans. Specific topics will include hormone levels, sexual variation in non-human species, sex biases within scientific research, and the existence of transgender individuals.

### **SOCIETY AND GENETICS 88SB**

Title: A Short History & Critical Examination of Bioethics

Student Facilitator: Elizabeth Seger

Faculty Mentor: Soraya de Chadarevian

Description:

For centuries the Hippocratic Oath has upheld a tradition of medical ethics centered on the roles and obligation of the physician. However, in a globalizing world characterized by rapid development in biotechnology and medicine, the emphasis of medical ethics has shifted from doctors' obligations, to individual patients' rights and the promotion of biomedical research. It is the goal of the newly emerging professional bioethicist to objectively define moral right and wrong in the context of modern society, science and medicine. But is it possible to come to objective moral conclusion? What gives the bioethicist the authority to fill such an impactful role? Are there external factors that might motivate or alter the seemingly objective goals of bioethics?

This class will explore the rich history of medical ethics and the factors that influenced and necessitated the emergence of bioethics. Students will critically examine the role bioethics in modern medicine and research. What works? Can the bioethics system be improved to better serve science and medicine?

### **SOCIOLOGY 88S**

Title: Critical Introduction to Mass Incarceration

Student Facilitator: Saskia Maltz

Faculty Mentor: Marcus Anthony Hunter

Description:

Imprisonment has always been a central feature of American public life, but today more people are behind bars than ever before. New technologies, including ankle monitors, surveillance cameras, predictive policing and ID databases, extend the carceral experience well beyond the physical boundaries of prison walls. This era of "mass incarceration" has been brought to national attention by recent scholarship such as Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, hit shows like *Orange Is The New Black* and countless popular songs. Using a wide variety of sources, with particular attention paid to blogs written by people in prison, we will critically assess how ideas about prison, safety, rehabilitation and justice are shaped. Situating the modern prison within its broader social, historical, political and economic contexts, this course examines who is imprisoned in America, how prison impacts individuals and society, and what alternatives exist.

**WORLD ARTS AND CULTURES 88S**

Title: YOU

Student Facilitator: Arami Walker

Faculty Mentor: Victoria Marks

Description:

This course will explore the intersectionality between Eastern and Western philosophies surrounding self-realization. Students will analyze poets, psychologists, and spiritualists who have influenced the collective consciousness in regards to self hood. They will also participate and explore exercises that have been used to encounter the self in both Eastern and Western cultural rituals. Due to the intercultural and anthropological nature of the materials, students will be encouraged to understand concepts such as cultural appropriation and “New Age” thinking. The course will offer an opportunity to participate in dialogue and classroom activities that will explore these methodologies and discourses through discussion and practice. The classroom will focus heavily on community building and creating a safe space for students to ask important questions surrounding their identity.