

## USIE Seminars – Spring 2017

### **Biomedical Research 88S—Limitations of Science: Pseudoscience, Research Misconduct, and Fraudulent Discoveries**

**Student Facilitator: Arielle Tripp | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero**

Do cellphones cause cancer? Does marijuana eat your brain? Are BPA free plastic bottles really safe? Daily we are bombarded with scientific studies in the media, but rarely is sufficient evidence provided to corroborate these claims. What is an individual to believe? How can we separate genuine breakthroughs from absurdities? Through deconstructing scientific research and examining provocative real-world examples, this course will examine a variety of issues influencing the nature of scientific inquiry and the culture of science, such as: demarcation of science from non-science, Hippocratic oath of science, abstract and practical limitations of human knowledge, science in the media, and the borderlines of science. Science enthusiasts and interested layman will come away with a holistic appreciation for the subjectivity of scientific inquiry, develop scientific literacy, and learn how to interpret science at its fringes.

### **Civic Engagement 88S—Power, Privilege, and Perspectives: Examining Dynamics of Community Service in Los Angeles**

**Student Facilitator: Celeste Romano | Faculty Mentor: Kathy O'Byrne**

Service is often presented as an eternally “good” activity, one that connects students to their communities, instills values of social responsibility, and produces individuals who are more tolerant and culturally aware. However, service can also reinforce hierarchies and systems of oppression and exploit marginalized groups for social benefit. This seminar will engage students involved with service work in classroom discussions and activities with an explicit focus on social justice. Students will lead the conversation, reflecting on their experiences and roles as volunteers and advocates and the privilege and power we are accorded as members of higher education. The class will challenge students to think critically about the work they’re involved in, the underlying structure of community service, the systematized inequities service work attempts to address, and how service work can perpetuate those inequities. We will then transition into a discussion of how we can change current systems: shifting perspectives, challenging top down approaches, and redefining what it means to be an “ally.”

### **Communication Studies 88S—Celebrity and Fan Culture**

**Student Facilitator: Elisa Cottarelli | Faculty Mentor: Michael Suman**

Why did a lock of Justin Bieber’s hair sell for \$40,668 on eBay? What effect did Oprah have on boosting votes for Obama in 2007? Why are the young so engaged in pop culture? Did Liam Payne of One Direction’s tweet *really* inspire Burger King to bring back “chicken fries” to their menu? This seminar will explore these, and many other, questions surrounding celebrity and fan culture. In the first half of the seminar, you will learn about the role of celebrities in our society, and in the second, you will learn about the role and characteristics of fan culture. This seminar will explore topics such as celebrity endorsements, reality television, politics, celebrity worship syndrome, fan creation, and the power and effect of the Internet on fan-celebrity relationships. This seminar will be divided into one-part lecture, one-part discussion per class. You should be able to reflect on the importance of celebrity and fan culture in your own lives and in today’s media. Throughout the quarter, we will look at relevant theories and current events in the entertainment industry that pertain to celebrity and fan culture.

### **Computer Science 88S—Safety in the Cloud: Introduction to Cybersecurity**

**Student Facilitator: Frank Chen | Faculty Mentor: Peter L. Reiher**

With the advancement of accessible technology such as the Internet and smartphones, more and more people (especially the younger generation) are accustomed to establishing an online presence. Our privacy has always been an important aspect of our lives in this world, but not as many people understand how “online privacy” works. Our emails, electronic purchases, files, and sensitive information can be easily taken away from us if we are not educated in protecting ourselves online.

### **Education 88S—Embracing Identity: Learn About Your Ancestry**

**Student Facilitator: Amy Aldana | Faculty Mentor: Sandra H. Graham**

Have you ever wondered who you are or how you got here? If you have, you are not alone. This seminar will allow you to explore these universal questions through learning about your ancestral roots and your family’s heritage. Heritage, whether it be national, cultural, or family is an endowment of unique sets of historical knowledge; but foremost, heritage is *your* history. Learning about our family’s history is essential to understanding ourselves, basic humanity, and diversity. In this seminar, each student will construct their family tree using resources such as Ancestry.com and an oral history approach. An oral history workshop will be provided so that students can obtain information through interviewing family members. By completing this class, you will gain a better understanding of your identity through learning about your ancestral roots, and your family’s heritage.

### **English 88SA—Speak Write Now: Performance as Literary Analysis**

**Student Facilitator: Ashley Hope | Faculty Mentor: Eric Jager**

In this class we will take on the roles of actor, director, author, reader, and spectator, using performance as a critical lens for understanding literature. The original medium for encountering literature is performance: Greek tragedies were performed on stage and epic poems were sung at palace feasts. Today we analyze literary works as text and build the study of literature around texts, but the origin of literature is in performance. We will return to the stage and revisit the critical role of performance in understanding literature. In this class we will examine how writers and performers stage meaning for different audiences and mediums. Some questions we will consider: How is performance an act of literary analysis? How does performance create meaning the text alone cannot convey?

### **English 88SB—The Three Amigos: Introduction to Contemporary Mexican Cinema**

**Student Facilitator: Tyra Kristiansen | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huehls**

Mexican directors have recently dominated the Academy Awards, which is an important cultural phenomenon given the Academy’s lack of representation. For the past three years, the coveted best director award has gone to Mexican directors: Alfonso Cuarón in 2013 and consecutive awards to Alejandro G. Iñárritu in 2014 and 2015. Three Mexican directors in particular have garnered transnational success: Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro G. Iñárritu, and Guillermo Del Toro. Over 10 weeks we will focus on these three directors’ prominent Spanish language films that have transformed Mexican Cinema (specifically Cuarón’s *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), Iñárritu’s *Amores Perros* (2000) and Del Toro’s *El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006)). In the seminar, we will explore common themes across these three films, while also distinguishing the differences between them in terms of narrative form and style. Some themes that will be explored are transnationalism, machismo, Chicana archetypes, and racial identity in relation to contemporary Mexico.

### **English 88SC—Black Pleasure / Black Pain**

**Student Facilitator: Amara Lawson-Chavanu | Faculty Mentor: Uri G. McMillan**

Longstanding debates within Black feminist scholarship have been dedicated to issues of objectification, body commodification and sexual agency. The central question of this discourse has largely been whether or not embodiments of perceived sexual excess contest or remain complicit in histories of rendering Black women's bodies as deviant. Therefore, this seminar will aim to look beyond binary discourses of agency/oppression, pleasure/pain to deal with the complexities of Black women's intimate, erotic and sexual lives. In this course, we will engage the following questions: How have Black women historically negotiated sexual and non-sexual forms of pleasure under conditions or spaces of objectification, exploitation or trauma? What are the politics of Black women's production and consumption of sexual labor? Material will include selections from the fields of Black feminist pleasure politics, queer of color critique, Black cultural studies and Black performance theory.

### **English 88SD—Complicity/Possibility: Recent Shifts in U.S. Fiction**

**Student Facilitator: Rachael Lee | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huehls**

American culture, particularly the oft-condemned millennial generation, is frequently imagined as doomed to a wasteland of meaningless consumption—the Internet, Adderall, quinoa, friends, happiness, art, etc. are eerily reduced to the same plane of exchange and seemingly rendered abstract and value-less. This crisis has led recent U.S. fiction writers to explore: What alternative modes of meaning and value might point us to better possibilities? In this course, we will read Tao Lin's *Taipei* (2013) as one text that deftly intervenes in this conversation. By situating *Taipei* alongside topical articles, we will explore the ambiguous relationship between complicity and possibility in current literary modes—a crucial exercise during such a politically charged moment in American history. Specific topics include: re-conceptualizations of space and time; complications of human memory in a digital era; consumerism and the millennial generation; cultures of depression; and the value of experimental literature.

### **English 88SE—Through the Eyes of the Bystander: Breaking Perceptions of Oppression**

**Student Facilitator: Mahnoor Saleem | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott**

Oppression. It is a term invoked to represent the ultimate form of injustice on set peoples. There is a vast amount of mediums revolving around ideas of oppression, from vigilante and superhero movies to historical analyses of past events. These mainstream perceptions of oppression open our eyes to ideas of oppression. Yet, in other ways, they reduce and simplify oppression to specific events, genres, peoples, etc. In this process of reduction, other, perhaps more current, stories of oppression can be lost. By the end of this course, students should be able to: (1) Understand and define mechanisms of oppression, (2) Identify and recognize current forms of oppression, and (3) Empower others to think critically about their ideas of oppression.

### **English 88SF—Frankenstein, Monster or Maker: Unlocking the Inner Romantic**

**Student Facilitator: Melanie Taing | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott**

On a stormy summer night in a Swiss lake house in 1816, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin sat with two of England's most famous writers: her soon-to-be husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Polidori. Engrossed in the reading of ghost stories, Lord Byron proposed a contest—the winner of the contest would be the writer with the best horror story. At just 18 years old, Mary Godwin wrote *Frankenstein*, one of the most famous horror stories in history. Despite Hollywood's inaccurate and over-the-top depictions of the creature in various cinematic renditions, Shelley's novel touches upon major intellectual questions that we, as a collective, continue to grapple with today: Should there be limits to scientific inquiry? What is the relationship between human rationality and human emotion? What is the role of the individual in relation to society or the family? In this seminar, we will be examining how Shelley attempts to answer these questions in *Frankenstein*, as well as how Hollywood does so, and introspectively asking ourselves these same questions in relation to our world today.

### **English 88SG—There's A Catch: An Exploration of Satire Through Catch 22**

**Student Facilitator: David Veta | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott**

An exploration of satire in contemporary English literature through the lens of Joseph Heller's World War II novel, *Catch 22*. Students will be asked to read and comment on the absurd and satirical elements of the text, as well as discuss the elements they find particularly funny and interesting in class. Themes explored by Heller in the book (e.g., insanity, bureaucracy, capitalism, morbidity) will be pondered and their contemporary relevance discussed.

### **Gender Studies 88S—Playing God: American Transgender Healthcare Experiences from 1950 to Present**

**Student Facilitator: Elias Lawliet | Faculty Mentor: Michelle F. Erai**

This course will explore the often tumultuous relationships between transgender Americans and their healthcare providers over the past sixty years. This course seeks to create a more nuanced understanding of the transgender medical experience, from the gender clinics that proliferated at universities nationwide (including UCLA) to the current discussions about medical autonomy and insurance coverage. Finally, we will look at recent research into the experiences transgender Angelenos are having with their healthcare providers to see how far we've come...and how far we have yet to go.

### **Management 88S—Mad Over Marketing: Why We Buy What We Buy**

**Student Facilitator: Sashvat Somany | Faculty Mentor: Dominique M. Hanssens**

In this seminar, we will study the world of marketing with a holistic approach combining the creative, strategic and psychological elements of marketing. We will look at different marketing campaigns across a variety of brands and media channels such as TV, Social Media, Print, Out-of-Home, Guerilla, etc. At the end of this course students will be able to answer the following questions—How is this brand or product relevant to the consumer? How is the product different from the competition? On what media channels was the product advertised and why? How is the brand's strategy related to concepts such as social proof and reciprocity? Were there any specific psychological tools of persuasion that the campaign utilized? What was the creative idea behind this campaign? Is the campaign even working?

### **Mathematics 88S—Math in Everyday Language: A Hands-On Exploration**

**Student Facilitator: Anahita Sarvi | Faculty Mentor: Michael A. Hill**

Have you ever felt intimidated by what seems to be an impenetrable jumble of mathematical symbols? In contrast, have you ever found mathematics to be much more palpable and vibrant than a quick glance at a typical textbook may suggest? In this course, we will explore fundamental concepts from mathematics in a tangible, interactive manner. No previous knowledge of mathematics is required. We will use a variety of activities and media (games, clay, music, etc.) to study topics in linear algebra, differential equations, single and multi-variable calculus, and Fourier analysis. The class is designed so that students with any level of familiarity with the field may gain new insight and develop an intuitive understanding of mathematics.

### **Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics 88S—Viruses: Harmful Agents with Medicinal Applications**

**Student Facilitators: Louis Massoud and Zaid Hikmat | Faculty Mentor: Asim Dasgupta**

Exploring the use of viruses as tools in medical research, including discussion of their adoption as therapeutic agents. Students will be introduced to the basic processes exhibited by selected viruses, which will lay the foundation to understand the therapeutic potentials of viruses as delivery systems in gene therapy. Students will have a chance to meet with a distinguished virologist, who is an active researcher and professor at UCLA.

### **Music 88S—From Fingerpickers to Metalheads: How Guitar Took Over World**

**Student Facilitator: Juan Rivera | Faculty Mentor: Peter F. Yates**

In this seminar, we will be taking a close look at how the guitar has become the most popular instrument in the world. More specifically, the focus will be on examining the characteristics of selected popular guitar styles. What makes the guitar so appealing and versatile? What are the differences and similarities between each style? How can I distinguish them? These and other questions will be answered as we look at how this instrument has developed within styles such as flamenco, reggae, rock, blues, and heavy metal. We will also look at the social, economic and political role the guitar plays in the style's culture. Other topics of discussion will be on guitar construction and the role of gender in guitar playing including important contributions by women guitarists. This will include live demonstrations, analysis of each style, and class discussions. This course is designed so that students of any level of familiarity may gain new insights and develop an understanding of the guitar. No previous guitar or musical experience is required to take the class.

## **Music History 88S—Modern Conversations in Hip-Hop: Important Motifs and Relevant Cities**

**Student Facilitator: Amir Adam Dailamy | Faculty Mentor: Robert R. Fink**

Historically, the opinions and sounds coming out of hip-hop can arguably serve as a metaphorical pulse-check of the current state of America. This class will create a structured space for students to discuss a few of the pertinent conversations in hip-hop, as I believe a thorough breakdown of these topics will help us in the self-realization of our generation. All of these conversations will ultimately pursue the task of defining the current zeitgeist of hip-hop in America, and what it implies for trends in future generations of music.

## **Philosophy 88S—Terrorism, State, and Justification**

**Student Facilitator: Chad Serrao | Faculty Mentor: Alexander J. Julius**

The subject of terrorism is highly prevalent in contemporary American discourse. Politicians and news pundits alike discuss acts of terrorism, its origins, and its consequences. However, in the current discourse, it is rare to ask what terrorism is. In the course we will attempt to understand the nature of terrorism, from a philosophical point of view. The class will attempt to answer two questions. First, how does terrorism differ from warfare? And second, how does terrorism differ from homicide? The two questions will provide guidance on our journey to understand terrorism; they will influence the way in which we ultimately conceptualize terrorism. The course attempts to answer the two questions with philosophical and historical material on terrorism.

## **Political Science 88S—We, The Corporations**

**Student Facilitator: Austin Barraza | Faculty Mentor: Steven Bilakovics**

A congressman sponsors a prescription drug law and later becomes president of a pharmaceutical lobbying firm. A group of oil executives meet with white house officials to discuss energy policy days before environmentalists arrive. A Las Vegas casino company donates twenty million dollars to support one political party. Though these three episodes may seem unrelated, they reflect a trend in our political system: corporations today are able to exercise unmatched influence over government. This course will look at one side of the debate on corporate power over politics by examining how corporations influence government in order to produce policies that protect their economic interests. Comparisons will be drawn between different eras of American history to understand the relationship between big business and government. A brief overview of constitutional provisions and lobbying will also be discussed as well as possible approaches to reigning in corporate power.

## **Psychology 88S—Criminal Justice: History, Neuroscience, and Psychology Behind Major Controversies**

**Student Facilitator: Anna Zervos | Faculty Mentor: Theodore F. Robles**

The U.S. Criminal Justice system has been and continues to be a source of major debate: from the use of the death penalty, to the use of solitary confinement, to the use of the bail system. In this course we will deconstruct these debates using a historical, neuroscience, and psychological lens. With a critical eye, we will delve into the cyclic criminal justice system, starting with the arrest of an individual and ending with the release of an individual.

## **Society and Genetics 88S—Dolphins: People of the Sea**

**Student Facilitator: Kayla Arjasbi | Faculty Mentor: Jessica W. Lynch Alfaro**

Dolphins are known to be smiley and playful animals, capable of responding to human commands and performing complex acrobatics. They are also one of the most intelligent nonhuman species to ever exist. Some may even argue that they are smarter than humans. Why is this? What makes them so 'smart'? How do they communicate? Do they have culture? What makes them like us? In this course we will investigate the rich, complex lives of dolphins and discover the meaningful, putatively 'human' aspects we both share: social-emotional relationships, elaborate language and dialects, and remarkable problem solving behavior. We will also discuss issues in captivity and conservation, and explore ways to create positive change for our sea-'people' counterparts—through habitat restoration, sustainable fishing, and environment sustainability.

## **Statistics 88S—Shaping the Future: Machine Learning and Data Science**

**Student Facilitator: Connor Hennen | Faculty Mentor: Vivian Lew**

This course will explore how the rapidly emerging field of data science will fundamentally revolutionize the mechanisms and strategies through which a wide array of industries operate. We will look at how big data can impact the campaign strategies of politicians, diagnose and treat disease, determine the tactics of sports franchises, drive business strategy, and help develop automated technologies and machines. Next, there will be an introduction to the means by which data science is conducted, such as the Python programming language, statistical techniques, and algorithms. Lastly, we will consider perhaps the most compelling prospect of the data science field, machine learning, which enables computers to learn and develop independent of human input.