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African American Studies

Depictions, Ideals, and Perspectives of the African-American Family as Told by Television (2019)

Student Facilitator: Chinyere Nwonye | Faculty Mentor: Pat Turner

Explore the history of Black representation in American television from the 1950s to the present. Assess the relationship between televisual representations and reality to consider how TV reflects and creates ideals of the African-American family. Contemplate the impact of media depictions on our own perceptions of people and culture.

Seeking the Sakhu: Introduction to Pan-African Black Psychology (2023)

Student Facilitator: Thyra A. Cobbs | Faculty Mentor: Caroline Streeter

This seminar is an introduction to Pan-African Black Psychology which involves the application of African-centered psychological theories and concepts to the mental health of continental and diasporic African peoples. The course will begin with the socio-historical development of African-centered Black Psychology, from its historical roots in ancient Egypt to the founding of the Association of Black Psychologists during the 1960s to the present day. An emphasis will be placed on the radical school of thought in African American Psychology, but Pan-African psychological science will be applied to the diverse cultural and social experiences of continental and diaspora Africans. The dialectic relationship between the traditional African worldview and African philosophies such as Ma'at, Ubuntu/Botho, and Kawaiida with Pan-African Black Psychology will be discussed in depth. Students will gain an understanding of Africentric research methods and psychological interventions by the end of the course.

Ancient Near East

Ages of Enchantment: The Witch and Her Origins Through Modern Pop Culture (2022)

Student Facilitator: Minh-Thu Nguyen | Faculty Mentor: Gina Konstantopoulos

In this seminar, we will explore the figure known as the “Witch”. Who is she? Where did she come from, and what does she represent? Starting with early mentions of her in Ancient Near Eastern sources, we will examine the developments of her characterization through Ancient Greek, Medieval, Early Modern, and 19th/20th century fantasy Golden Age depictions. Halfway through the course, we will switch gears and apply this analysis to modern representations and reimaginings. This includes the discussion of themes such as spirituality and sexuality; sisterhood and spinsterhood; healing and hexes; and the examination of these dualities. Additionally, we will discuss which aspects of the archetype are emphasized depending on the identity of the writer and the time period of creation. What do these traits reveal about societal values and the aim of the work?

Anthropology

Forget CSI: The Reality of Forensic Anthropology (2007)

Student Facilitator: Melinda Munroe | Faculty Mentor: Jeffrey Brantingham

Forensic anthropology is the application of the science of physical anthropology and the study of the human skeleton in a legal setting, most often in criminal cases where the victim's remains are more or less skeletonized. This class will study methods on determining the sex and age of a skeleton, and use those methods while examining real bones in class.

From Spain to UCLA: The Culture of Flamenco Music (2007)

Student Facilitator: Juben Rabbani | Faculty Mentor: Mariko Tamanoi

In our modern world, we are faced with intolerable violence and hate. Some argue it is money, race, or even culture that divides one group from another. In spite of our differences, all humans share a homogenous trait: music. It is this trait of music that can bring divergent cultures together to a shared musical experience. Though the world is filled with genres of music that are vastly diverse and originate from distinctive cultures, these cultures are related to one another through the common production of musical structures. Sometimes the musical features of such cultures – cultures that have been divided by war and prejudice – are joined in a single genre. This seminar explores one such genre - Flamenco from Spain.

Shamans, Spirits, and Soul Stealing: The Anthropology of Spiritual Medicine (2007)

Student Facilitator: Kristine Van Hamersveld | Faculty Mentor: Gail Kennedy

In the mainstream culture of the United States, most people use doctors and nurses to treat disease. They visit hospitals and rely on biological concepts to explain how and why they get sick. In 80% of the world, however, “medical care,” in the sense that it is known, is either inaccessible or undesired, yet people manage to survive. Rather than using biomedicine, some cultures look at healing and ailments as spiritually-rooted, and in many situations, the infirm are taken to shamans who go into a trance, rather than to doctors who go into surgery. This course will introduce students to different ways of looking at health and medicine around the globe, including here in the United States.

Emergence from the Secret War: The Hmong-American Experience (2007)

Student Facilitator: Eric Yang | Faculty Mentor: Sharon Bays

Who are the Hmong? What is the Secret War? What is their past, their present, and their future? The answer to these questions will not be found in textbooks at elementary schools, junior high schools, or high schools across the country. Very few college-level classes teach or even touch upon the Hmong and the Hmong-American experience. This course focuses entirely on the Hmong-American experience. The Hmong have a unique history and culture. As an ethnic minority which spans across many countries, their experiences are very different from the mainstream cultures of the nation-states that they inhabit.

Brain, Mind, and Human Experience (2010)

Student Facilitator: Raymond Beyda | Faculty Mentor: Dario Nardi

In this seminar we will explore the history of our understanding of the brain and mind, its basic structure and physiology, and the way these structures have evolved over time. Along the way we will discover how our understanding of this organ has changed as new technologies have allowed us to see deeper into our thoughts and actions. In addition to learning what the brain is made of, we will explore the concepts of mind and behavior. What makes us human? Where do self awareness and consciousness reside? The majority of our discussions will be largely devoted to case studies which will illustrate how mysterious and how amazing the human brain and mind are. From alien hands to romantic love, we will explore how human experience is, at least in part, sculpted by the circuitry of our brains.

Female Automobility: Women, Cars, and Culture (2011)

Student Facilitator: Alexandra Athens | Faculty Mentor: Jessica Cattelino

From the way we interact with the environment to our conceptions of ourselves and others, transportation shapes our lives daily. Because the United States remains an automotive-centric society, it is important to consider the relationship between individuals and automobiles. A gendered approach to studying this relationship is particularly informative, as automobiles have historically been associated with males and masculinity. In this course we will utilize anthropological, women's, transportation, and media studies in order to better understand the relationship between women and the automobile. Conceptions of the relationship between women and cars have changed and continue to change, and these transformations reflect and reveal larger socio- historical-political factors. The study of these historical and modern developments, depictions, and relationships will be approached through various topics. Selected topics include notable technological advancements, the law, the "road trip", media analyses, and niche automotive occupations/pursuits.

Some Like It Hot: Evolution and the Psychology of Food Preferences (2011)

Student Facilitator: Leonid Tiokhin | Faculty Mentor: Daniel Fessler

This course will examine human food preferences through the lens of evolutionary theory. Like all other organisms on earth, humans have been shaped by evolutionary forces operating over large time scales. As such, we can gain substantial insight into human food preferences and food choice psychology by thinking about the function of food preferences and asking "why do we like the foods that we do?" We will discuss a wide range of issues, including people's consumption of "distasteful" foods such as spices, the evolution of disgust, learned taste aversions, changes in eating behaviors across the menstrual cycle, food moralization, and cross- cultural variation in food preferences and proscriptions. Students are encouraged to bring up topics of personal interest for discussion.

Multiple Perspectives on the Experience of Living with an Irreversible, Lengthy, and Impactful Medical Condition (2012)

Student Facilitator: Leenoy Hendizadeh | Faculty Mentor: Marjorie Goodwin

An objective of anthropology is to understand another's point of view of the world. This course's purpose is to understand a different perspective each week, one that belongs to a patient with an impacting, chronic condition. These conditions include those that are psychological (i.e. dementia) or physiological (i.e. an inoperable spinal cord tumor that leads to paralysis from the neck down). We will explore how a condition might influence a patient's ideas about himself, the medical establishments, social and political forces, and the people he interacts with. The readings will be from different disciplines including psychology, anthropology, biomedical ethics, and clinical medicine. As the class progresses, we will discuss patient autonomy in various clinical ethical dilemmas.

The Anthropology of Gender and International Development (2015)

Student Facilitator: Megan Moran | Faculty Mentor: Akhil Gupta

Broad historical and theoretical introduction to gender, as cultural change, and inter- and intra- national economic and political development. Overview of anthropology of development focusing on gender through application of feminist Marxist, Hegelian dialectical theory, and political economy approach. Balance of theoretical reading and case studies highlighting global uneven development.

Anthropology of Beauty (2020)

Student Facilitator: Doris Vidas | Faculty Mentor: Alan Page Fisk

What is beauty? Who decides? Exploration of human experience of aesthetic appreciation. Analysis of different facets of beauty through biological and cultural lens as means of examining universality and variability in its perceptions. Focus on holistic discussion of beauty. Discussion of human beauty. Focus on its more abstract forms such as art, performance, and nature. Draws from different disciplines such as history, biology, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology for a multifaceted approach to the subject. Case studies from a diverse range of cultures to demonstrate variability that exists within the cultural framework of beauty.

Cross-Cultural Analyses of Fertility Policies (2021)

Student Facilitator: Yuyin (Gloria) Yang | Faculty Mentor: Carole Browner

This course will start with an overview of fertility policies across countries, as different countries' expectations and approaches to population policy bring our attention to their differences in cultural background, economic structure, and political ideology. Through comparison, we will learn to analyze a policy with respect to the historical period and political atmosphere during which it was created, as well as to evaluate a policy with a holistic and development perspective.

The Ecology of Love (2023)

Student Facilitator: Jordan Yanowitz | Faculty Mentor: Jessica Lynch

This course will be centered on understanding how love shapes our interactions with each other and with our shared home in the world. We will begin by establishing a common understanding of what love is and where it comes from. We will explore how we interact with the world through love, and how the context of our development is colored by love or a lack thereof. We will build an understanding of what it means to love one's body and mind and the role of intersubjectivity in the cultivation of love between oneself and others. Working across ecological scales, we will examine how all of our relationships, with our kin, our friends and with a broader community are affected by love, and the role that love plays within these contexts. The love of our home is central to the ecology of love – after exploring love across interpersonal scales, engage with love of places, of ideas and of the whole of nature. Connecting these to history, we will work toward understanding the essential aspects and limitations of love. Love is a deeply personal yet nearly universal idea amongst people and is something that should be studied in a way quite different from a standard scientific topic. For each of these topics, students will be encouraged to engage and share their own subjective experience to build a more holistic understanding throughout our learning community. Students will be expected to engage with both the scientific, and philosophical ideas presented in the class and to work to integrate their own perspectives to drive their own inquiry into the ecology of love.

Integrative Methods in Study of Gender, Sexuality, and Culture (2024)

Student Facilitator: David Aguilar | Faculty Mentor: Jessica Lynch

This seminar explores human expressions of gender and sexuality across the Anthropological subfields. Through analyzing biological, sociocultural, linguistic, and archaeological anthropology, students will explore cultural systems that influence gender expression and sexuality. This course examines biological and evolutionary frameworks for understanding human sexuality, as well as linguistic and sociocultural methods for interpreting gendered systems, identities, and expressions. This seminar encourages students to blend the four subfields of anthropology to theorize more comprehensive ways of studying and understanding human sexualities, and gender identities and expressions.

Architecture and Urban Design

Musical Urbanism (2014)

Student Facilitator: Ryan Conroy | Faculty Mentor: Roger Sherman

Popular music is often analyzed for its cultural implications, but rarely is music thought of spatially. Bob Dylan and Tupac are readily linked with social and historical significance, but how can music speak to the physical environment? This class will analyze case studies of music movements in the spaces that generated them. From Compton to Manchester, urban space is never a passive actor in the production and consumption of music. In this course we'll unpack how music has the capacity to conjure perceptions of space different from that elicited by sight. In analyzing the relationships between a given song or album and its urban environment, we will ultimately address how music can uniquely reflect the spatial conditions of a given city.

Introduction to Citizen Architecture: Exploring Architectural Methods for Social and Spatial Justice (2020)

Student Facilitator: Derek Luu | Faculty Mentor: Dana Cuff

Hands-on architectural education while engaging with social issues. Introduction to fundamental procedures of architectural design, and also demonstration of how processes of designing, planning, and constructing have social implications for engaging with major contemporary urban issues. Exposure to positive design practices including group collaboration, creative problem solving, and reflection-based improvement. Exposure of danger and myth of architect as individual agent of ingenuity and expertise, and inherent conflict between individual and collective interests.

Art

Art and Feminisms: Theory and Studio (2007)

Student Facilitator: Mahyar Nili | Faculty Mentor: Hirsch Perlman

This class will explore the intersection of Art and Feminisms, with a focus on making art, and dialogue around intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and religion, among others. Through the critical reading of texts, roundtable discussions, slide lectures, video screenings, exhibit viewings, artist lectures, and consciousness-raising, we will delve into the history of Art and make work that is informed by a plurality of feminisms.

Art History

Contemporary Chinese Photography (2007)

Student Facilitator: Julia Wai | Faculty Mentor: Hui-Shu Lee

Chinese contemporary art unquestionably deals with standards of beauty, modes of expression, and reflections of social, economic, and political conditions and climates. This seminar examines issues of contemporary art in China through the medium of photography. Since the Cultural Revolution, photography in China has taken a dramatic leap, reflecting and commenting on China's booming economic growth and increased global presence. By using photography, this course will identify and analyze the various tensions of contemporary art in China- its definitions, terms, and driving forces.

Islamic Art and Architecture in Spain (2008)

Student Facilitator: Christine Lee | Faculty Mentor: Irene Biermann McKinney

This seminar explores Spanish Islamic Art and its unique multicultural quality. Students enrolled will understand the meaning of art and its relationship to form, function, and social history, and examine the lasting legacy of Spanish Islamic art in our lives today.

Depicting Human Sacrifice in Pre-Columbian America (2008)

Student Facilitator: Sarah Stuck | Faculty Mentor: Cecelia Klein

This seminar examines the possible motives behind and nature of Pre-Columbian sacrifices through art history, in contrast to colonial explanations and modern representations, and how it impacted and shaped indigenous society. The cultures that students will look at are the Aztec, Teotihuacán, Inka, and Moche.

A Tale Told by an Idiot: Dada Writing (2009)

Student Facilitator: Amy Sanchez | Faculty Mentor: George Baker

This seminar will explore the origins and legacy of Dada writings and how they function in response to World War I and the Industrial Revolution by examining texts of the movement, focusing on the work of the Dada poets and artists: Tristan Tzara, Andre Breton, Francis Picabia, Hugo Ball, Marcel Duchamp, Apollinaire, and Kurt Schwitters. Students will explore how the negation of communication and abstraction of language in conventional terms is a means of creating an art object that lives in the hope of creating a world of absurdity that liberates those taking part in it from the constraints of nationalism, and technology.

Mmmuseums: The Savory Side of Angeleno Arts Institutions (2012)

Student Facilitator: Kelly Tang | Faculty Mentor: Meredith Cohen

Why is it necessary to have a restaurant at a museum? Does the kind of food served in a museum's café correspond to the museum's mission, exhibitions, and reputation and if so, how? This course is interested in using the museum's restaurant/café as a point of entry to discuss the museum and its roles as a prominent cultural institution, as a recreational space for gathering people near and far, and as an agent for social change. Through the application of methodologies borrowed from art history and museum studies, students will undertake focused examinations of select arts institutions near UCLA through personal visitations, selected readings, tastings of food, and class discussion. Scholarly articles, local newspapers, websites, menus, Yelp! reviews, and blogs will all be analyzed critically as components of how a museum's identity and purpose are constructed within contemporary Los Angeles.

Post-War Art in Los Angeles, 1957-1966 (2020)

Student Facilitator: Robert Hayden | Faculty Mentor: Miwon Kwon

Consideration of diverse network of artists and artistic practices in postwar Los Angeles. By focusing on art exhibitions that marked significant moments in the city's history, examination of the role that galleries, museums, curators, scholars, publications, and collectors play in establishing art historical canon. No prior knowledge of art history is necessary.

Asian

Anime of Interbeing: Breathing in the Calm of Mushishi (2024)

Student Facilitator: Ryan McGurk | Faculty Mentor: Satoko Shimazaki

This seminar will introduce students to the beautiful world of Yuki Urushibara's, *Mushishi*. *Mushishi* addresses some of the human anxieties toward nature and our own existence amidst the onset of the 21st century and rising concerns about climate change, ecological devastation, human severance from nature, and postmodernity. The course is meant to be an investigation into this particular work of art, the contexts it arises from, and the multitude of lessons it provides for our daily lives — a crucial reminder about our nature of interbeing, a reassurance about our connection with all living things. As a class we will engage with academic questions concerning relational beings, the sentient supernatural, mythic storytelling, Japanese folk histories, constructed nostalgia, and harmonies between the human and non-human realms, as presented in Urushibara's creation.

Asian American Studies

Francophone Vietnam: Literature and Film (2016)

Student Facilitator: Jason Hong | Faculty Mentor: Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo

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.

SEAing Resistance: Cultural Politics in Southeast Asian Diaspora (2021)

Student Facilitator: Jason Tuan Vu | Faculty Mentor: Evyn Le Espiritu Gandhi

This seminar focuses on cultural politics in the Southeast Asian diaspora with a focus on the themes of community and resistance. Broadly speaking, the Southeast Asian diaspora encompasses a number of refugee and immigrant communities, including but not limited to Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, Khmer, Thai, and Pilipinx peoples. Though diverse in their experiences, these groups share a number of characteristics beyond geographical origin. In particular, Southeast Asian communities have embodied resilience in a number of ways, from surviving the aftermaths of war and genocide to creating new lives across the globe. Recognizing how these stories are often sidelined in popular discourse, this course centers the work of Southeast Asian diasporic artists who have been pivotal in sharing their cultural identities through a variety of artistic mediums.

Log Kya Kahenge” : Understanding South Asian Mental Health Stressors, Challenges, and Stigma (2022)

Student Facilitator: Mahika Nayak | Faculty Mentor: Cindy Sangalang

Mental health is a pervasive yet deeply stigmatized issue amongst South Asians. This course is meant to equip students with an understanding of the nature and origin of stigma around mental health, issues that serve as stressors for the South Asian community, barriers to seeking help, and strategies for combating stigma and providing culturally-specific care. This course uses an intersectional lens to explore themes around immigration, the “model minority” myth, relationship violence, LGBTQ+ mental health, familial relationships, intergenerational trauma and culturally specific trauma-informed care.

Oceanic Filipinx Studies: The Currents of Anticolonial and Abolitionist Futures in Hawai'i (2023)

Student Facilitator: Sean Sugai | Faculty Mentor: Espiritu Lê Evyn Gandhii

“The ocean that surrounds us is the one physical entity that all of us in Oceania share. It is the inescapable fact of our lives. What we lack is the conscious awareness of it, its implications, and what we could do with it... All of us in Oceania today, whether Indigenous or otherwise, can truly assert that the sea is our single common heritage.” -- Epele Hau'ofa, *We Are The Ocean* “... [T]he new Oceanic studies may be well-intended attempts to transcend historical differences in the name of a common threat to humanity, but when not articulated with Native Pacific studies can have the effect of erasing struggles in and around the islands for sovereignty and stewardship of resources” -- Paul Lyons and Ty P Kāwika Tengan, *Introduction: Pacific Currents*

What does it mean to be Filipinx-American in a settler occupied Hawai'i? How does the ongoing settler colonialism, militarism, and imperialism in the Philippines and the Filipinx diaspora shape movement into and out of Hawai'i? How might embracing a (trans)oceanic approach to Filipinx identity in Oceania strengthen relationalities between Filipinx studies and Native Pacific studies and disrupt the empire in Oceania? And what does anticolonial and abolitionist work look like for lands, oceans, and peoples of and across Oceania?

This seminar will introduce students to Filipinx-American history and culture in settler occupied Hawai'i, particularly thinking comparatively through the ways in which Filipinx settlers negotiate structures of dispossession, racialization, and migration to Hawai'i in relation to broader structures of US empire and colonization in the Philippines and in diaspora. Through book excerpts, journals, poetry, literature, and film from Filipinx scholars in Hawai'i and in the Philippines, as well as from Native Hawaiian and Polynesian scholars and activists, students will engage in current debates in Oceania as it relates to settler-Indigenous relationalities and sovereignties. Touching on both the history and ongoing activist efforts in Oceania and elsewhere, such as Standing Rock, Black Lives Matter, and Mauna Kea Protests against the Thirty Meter Telescope, this seminar will ultimately aim to demonstrate how intimacies between land, ocean, and people offer new ways to imagine anticolonial and abolitionist futures against empire in Oceania and beyond.

Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Far East Futures (2024)

Student Facilitator: Victor Xie | Faculty Mentor: Victor Bascara

This seminar introduces students to the concept of techno-Orientalism. First theorized by Edward Said, Orientalism is a system of domination in which the West structurally imagines the East as a backwards and immoral threat to a modern and moral West. Techno-Orientalism, then, is the West's manifestation of fear towards the East's futuristic technological rise, imagining the East as dehumanized subjects who cannot be trusted with technology. We begin by exploring the ways in which empire, globalization, and race are connected in the concept of technoOrientalism. We will then focus on how the West portrays East Asia in the media and the larger consequences of such representation, as well as the forms of resistance that Asian American cultural production creates to combat techno-Orientalism. This course is designed to critically assess the political significance of imagining the future and its oppressive or liberating possibilities.

Asian Languages & Cultures: South Asia

Philosophy of Poetry in the Context of South Asia (2023)

Student Facilitator: Rasbi Garg | Faculty Mentor: Gyanam Mahajan

How is a poem able to convey emotion? Why do poets use restrictive forms and meters? What characterizes an aesthetic experience? Through discussion-based seminars, these questions, which are rooted in the philosophy of poetry, will be considered using theories from both South Asian and Western aesthetics. All theoretic learning will be grounded in a quarter-long exploration of the Urdu Ghazal, through which students will gain experience aesthetically analyzing works of poetry.

Asian Languages & Cultures

Survey of Contemporary Mandopop (2023)

Student Facilitator: Shenghan Li | Faculty Mentor: Michael Berry

This course will primarily focus on the introduction and analysis of twenty-first century Mandopop produced in Mainland China and Taiwan. Discussions will be centered around how diverse Mandopop lyrics reveal contemporary Chinese society through social, cultural, and political lenses. The majority of the songs this course will cover are centered around individual songwriters such as Joker Xue and Li Ronghao. Topics will include the popular genre China Wind (which mixes themes from traditional Chinese poetry and aesthetics with contemporary pop sensibilities), the articulation of love, hidden political meanings, the clash between traditional and contemporary ideology, and more. Students will understand contemporary China through pop music—a unique and understudied primary source.

Bioengineering

The Biology and Engineering of Superheroes (2018)

Student Facilitator: Francis Lin | Faculty Mentor: Jacob Schmidt

This course analyzes several unique superheroes and superpowers using relevant biology, physics, and engineering concepts. Students learn to use these concepts to evaluate if certain superpowers and superhero origin stories are scientifically sound. Innovative research is explored to assess whether technology can endow ordinary humans with superhuman abilities. Students leave the course with an understanding of the scientific gap between normal human beings and superheroes, and how that gap can be narrowed by new technology.

Tissue Engineering: Our Future of Medicine (2022)

Student Facilitator: Nicolas Pedroncelli | Faculty Mentor: Song Li

This course is an introduction to the widely interdisciplinary and fast-advancing field of tissue engineering that encompasses cell and developmental biology, materials science and chemistry, and engineering in order to replace, regenerate, or restore damaged or diseased tissues and organs. We will first learn the fundamental knowledge of this field and then explore its vast applications, such as disease modeling, drug discovery, cell therapies, artificial organs, and 3D-Bioprinting. Weekly seminars will be composed of both lectures and group discussions on the ethical implications of tissue engineering. Toward the end of the quarter, a speaker series will take place to provide you all with the opportunity to learn about the exciting advancements in tissue engineering directly from leaders in the field. Overall, this course aims to give students an introduction to the academic and industry perspectives of tissue engineering that will continue to drastically change the field of medicine in the coming decades. I hope that by the end of this quarter you all are as passionate about this exciting field as I am!

Biomedical Research

Picking Your Brains: Neuroanatomy through Mysterious Clinical Cases (2015)

Student Facilitator: Shaina Sedighim | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

Introduction to basic neuroanatomy as presented through a series of mysterious medical cases; basics of medical diagnosis, neurological exam, brain mechanisms of memory, movement, perception, and language. Students will have a chance to step into a physician's shoes, make assessments, analyses, and attempt to elucidate where in the brain a lesion may be present.

Limitations of Science: Pseudoscience, Research Misconduct, and Fraudulent Discoveries (2017)

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 laymen 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.

Molecular Biology in the 21st Century: Concepts & Techniques (2020)

Student Facilitator: Carla Pantoja | Faculty Mentor: Ira Clark

“YOU ARE NOT THE FATHER!” The audience goes quiet and the cameraman chases the supposed father down the hall. You’ve probably chuckled at this all too familiar situation from the Maury Povich show, but how exactly do scientists determine paternity? What is DNA fingerprinting? Why are there blots named after cardinal directions and why do we care about stem cells being the future of regenerative medicine? In this seminar, we will utilize the central dogma as a framework to understand central molecular biology processes like DNA replication, transcription, and translation. Along the way, students will not only be introduced to cutting-edge molecular biology techniques researchers utilize on a daily basis, but also learn to critically interpret data. There will be an emphasis on understanding the logic and approach researchers use in answering life’s fundamental questions. To contextualize the topics of study, we will have the opportunity to discuss contested topics like CRISPR gene-editing and its implication for the future of regenerative medicine.

Maternal Child Health: Disease and the Microbiome (2023)

Student Facilitator: Annabelle Leka | Faculty Mentor: Kirsten Turlo

The body is made up of trillions of microorganisms that make up what we know as the microbiome. The maternal microbiome in particular undergoes changes during pregnancy that affects the mother and child, playing an important role in building immunity and fighting disease. Where a woman lives, the food she eats, and the cultural decisions she makes to care for her baby- all of these things can affect the microbiome, the immune system, and the impact of disease on a mother and her child. In this course, we will study how disease and the microbiome acts and develops at the maternal child level. We will also examine the role of microorganisms in developing antibiotic resistance and how this affects maternal and child health. We will discuss infections and diseases seen during pregnancy and how this can affect an infant’s health. We will take a look at how infectious disease plays a role in this, as well as the development of antibiotic resistance as an added issue. Later, we will examine some case studies of countries outside of the United States that face high levels of maternal mortality. We will then review primary literature to see how different methods of delivery, feeding, and nutrition affect the microbiome, as well as implications of these changes to mothers and their infants.

Bioinformatics

Introduction to Neurotechnology (2021)

Student Facilitator: Allison Ung | Faculty Mentor: William Speier

This course is an introduction into the up and coming field of neurotechnology of which will deep dive into the potential applications of neurotechnology, neuroscience background, signal processing, ethics involved, prospective careers, and industry perspectives. The course strives to not only expose the students towards the industry, but to also culture critical thinking of the challenges facing the field and cultivate the ability to see between the lines to encourage innovation and discussion. These course objectives will be met with a weekly seminar that will bring not only the lecturer's perspective, but also industry and academic professional perspectives through demonstrations and a panel series towards the end of the quarter. The course strives to not provide answers, but to help foster a sense of curiosity and the skill of asking critical questions. As this is a new, growing field, the parameters and questions are limitless, thus, critical thinking and an eye for big encompassing questions are crucial to pushing the frontier.

Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Diamonds in the Rough: Genome Mining for New Therapeutics (2020)

Student Facilitator: Alexander Sooboo | Faculty Mentor: Yi Tang

Overview of natural product discovery and development into medicines. Exposure to sequencing, genetic editing, and recombinant biology, and associated ethical implications. Discussion of the current state of biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Designed to provide an overview on the field of genome mining, insight into laboratory research and pharmaceutical development, and a perspective on the process of discovering and developing natural product medicines.

Chemical Engineering

Everything on Energy: Solutions of Today and Tomorrow (2022)

Student Co-Facilitators: Brandon Taking and Elizabeth Zhang | Faculty Mentor: Yuzhang Li

Energy encompasses all functions and aspects of modern society. From the television screen that keeps us entertained at night to the pacemaker that keeps thousands of patients alive, energy is virtually used in some sort of shape and form by every human being. However, fossil fuel-based sources of energy, the more “traditional” sources, while very dependable, have contributed to an increase in greenhouse gases leading to climate change, which has drastically negative impacts on our environment and the global economy. In addition, more traditional sources of energy are also “non-renewable”—once depleted, society must find other sources of energy. This drives the need to transition to more sustainable, renewable forms of energy. During this transition, it is critical that we consider not only the advancements in energy generation and storage devices, but also the distribution of energy and the corresponding bodies developing these changes, namely academia, industry, and government. We must additionally account for the social, environmental, and economic impacts while implementing and applying these new solutions. Given its central role in our lives, energy is fittingly the center of many policies subject to heavy public scrutiny.

Chemistry & Biochemistry

From Smartphones to Diamonds, the Versatility of Inorganic Carbon (2016)

Student Facilitator: Winn Huynh | Faculty Mentor: Richard Kaner

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 to 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.



Elements of Life in Our Universe (2022)

Student Facilitator: Amish Jain | Faculty Mentor: Hung Pham

This seminar aims to demonstrate how core concepts from each of the sciences from physics to chemistry to biology, meaningfully interact with each other to give rise to the phenomena of life. We'll approach this topic in three sections, each focusing on a different phase of life in the universe. Starting at the Big Bang and the formation of the Solar System and the conditions conducive to life, we'll then turn our attention to the elements most related to life, and end at the "end" of the universe. Throughout this journey a simple atom acts as our protagonist, allowing us to see how, from the formation of that atom to its theoretical end, it is able to help or harm life in the universe. Ultimately, my goal is for you all to leave this course more inquisitive, and with a deeper appreciation for the world we inhabit, than when you came in.

21st-Century Technological Revolution and Science (2024)

Student Facilitator: Daria Rego | Faculty Mentor: Arlene Russell

In this seminar, students will gain an understanding of how 21st century internet advances (including widespread internet access, social media, and advanced digital technologies such as AI) have impacted scientific inquiry, education, and dissemination. The course will investigate a variety of case studies in science in the 21st century along with research papers and media. The course aims to leave students with a stronger understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the involvement of the internet in the enterprise of science.

Biochemistry of Love and Attachment: Exploration of Oxytocin's Roles in Each Stage of Life (2024)

Student Facilitator: Kelly Gocke | Faculty Mentor: Ryan Lannan

What happens on a biochemical level when we become attached to people? How do hormones play a role in shaping different attachment styles and alleviating the effects of broken attachments? This course will evaluate the complex role of the "love hormone," oxytocin, in various aspects of life ranging from birth to death. We will explore some of the biochemical components and pathways involved in topics such as romantic love, platonic love, sexual responses, heart break, attraction, lust, childbirth, parental attachment, sex differences, cardiovascular disease, and mental health.

Chicano/a Studies

'Yo Soy El Army': Chicanas, Chicanos, and the U.S. Military (2007)

Student Facilitator: Elvira Rodriguez | Faculty Mentor: Alicia Gaspar de Alba

“Yo Soy El Army”. The Spanish counterpart to the famous “Be All That You Can Be” seems to be on urban radio stations like Los Angeles’ Power 105.9FM every hour. Appropriately accompanying the recent advertising campaign are a slew of bilingual recruiters visiting barrio high schools and community events. This course will focus specifically on the relationship between the Chicano/a population, education, and the United States military, and engage students in six core areas of Chicano/a and U.S. military intersection: education, socioeconomic status, immigration, family, gender, and the media.

Immigrants in Mass Media Discourse (2018)

Student Facilitator: Oscar Gayton | Faculty Mentor: Reynaldo Macias

“Illegal aliens”, “anchor babies”, or “Dreamers”? The purpose of this seminar is to enlighten students and inform them about how undocumented immigrants are portrayed by the mass media. Through the application of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), students will examine how the mass media has and continues to influence the way in which we view society. The course intends to expand one’s understanding of the conflicting ideographs and frames being used by mass media outlets in the portrayal of the undocumented immigrant population.

#CentralAmericanTwitter: U.S Central Americans & Hashtag Activism (2019)

Student Facilitator: Leslie Aguilar | Faculty Mentor: Leisy Abrego

Central American communities have been present in the United States as early as the 1940’s; however, these longstanding communities have often been overshadowed by dominant monolithic Latinx discourses. As a result of an increasing use of social media, Central American visibility has increased tremendously over the last year. One of the biggest platforms, known as the #CentralAmericanTwitter hashtag on Twitter has played an important role in centering Central American experiences, narratives, histories, and contemporary news. The course can be a tool for students to conceptualize, analyze and discuss ways to tackle such inequalities that impact Central Americans today. This class will also allow non-Central American students to also engage with the complexities and heterogeneity of Latinx communities in the U.S. Students will explore the various topics that have been taking place in #CentralAmericanTwitter, that include, but are not limited to, the Central American exodus/refugee crisis, Black/Indigenous Central American communities, Central American cultural production, Central American Studies, etc.

20th Century El Salvador: the Lucha for an Egalitarian Society (2020)

Student Facilitator: Saraí Victoria Kashani | Faculty Mentor: Leisy J. Abrego

Focusing on the 1930s through the 1970s, this course surveys the historical, social, political, and economic conditions that stimulated the Salvadoran Civil War in 1980. Paying special attention to the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, this class also examines how Salvadorans have countered erroneous depictions of themselves as “passive agents” through various forms of activism, such as through peasant mobilizations and political education. As active agents of change, Salvadorans have actively and continuously battled colonial legacies, U.S. intervention and imperialism, and the consequences of neo-liberal policies. These transnational efforts encompass a strong legacy of egalitarian efforts that can be historically traced.

Mass Incarceration as a Public Health Crisis (2022)

Student Facilitator: Vera Arenas | Faculty Mentor: Gaye Theresa Johnson

This seminar will take an intersectional approach to how we view mass incarceration by looking at this issue from a public health lens and exploring its direct effects on people during and after incarceration as well as its downstream health effects on the general public. Topics that will be covered in this seminar include: the racial origins of mass incarceration as well as its health cycle, the social determinants of health, insight into health inside prisons, and the effects that mass incarceration ultimately has on the health of entire communities and especially the formerly incarcerated. Lastly, the seminar will cover the future of mass incarceration, in which we’ll discuss the need to reform the prison system and what our role is in this process. Aside from weekly lectures which will include discussion among students, this seminar will also include a service learning component with the goal of exposing them to real world mass incarceration activism. Throughout the course of the quarter, students will work in groups to complete a service project for a community organization actively working to help people affected by prisons. Service learning goes beyond traditional volunteering through incorporating a hands-on approach to education by providing students with experiences that reinforce seminar material with meaningful knowledge that they can apply to their future endeavors.

Latinx the Word: Discourses and Expression (2022)

Student Facilitator: Herman Chavez | Faculty Mentor: Marissa López

This seminar seeks to understand the creative and political dimensions of the term “Latinx” through close readings of ideology. In the first half of the course, we will develop a nuanced understanding of Latinx as a contested identity. In the second half of the course, we will apply this framework to a variety of social expressions. We will examine how Latinx operates within larger institutions, such as in government and universities. We will proceed to explore how writers, artists, musicians, and other creatives employ Latinx to construct identity. You will engage with mediating Latinx between political and creative expressions, considering how Latinx both creates and is created by these forces. This course is based on interdisciplinarity, incorporating critical and applied perspectives from political science, philosophy, comparative literature, musicology, and sociology. However, you will need no prior experience in any particular area; rather, any student interested in entering into dialogue with the dimensions of the Latinx identity is welcome.

Exploring Environmental Health Issues in the Latino Community (2023)

Student Facilitator: Isabella Blanco | Faculty Mentor: Genevieve Carpio

While pollution in the United States poses potential health risks for everyone, a large percentage of U.S Latinos live and work in communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution, contaminated drinking water, and pesticides. This seminar will be an introductory course on the state of U.S environmental health issues in the Latino community. Examples of topics that will be covered in this seminar include the intersections of transportation and labor, lack of access to green space, the impacts of urban planning, and environmental movement building. Students will have the opportunity to explore and discuss the political, economic, and social factors that contribute to these issues. This course will feature guest speakers from nonprofits seeking to address specific public health challenges for Latinos. Students will complete a final service project for a local community organization that includes course teachings. By taking this seminar, students will gain valuable skills in critical thinking, collaboration, and environmental justice research.

Telenovela Impact on Latine Society (2024)

Student Facilitator: Johnathan Valenzuela Mejia | Faculty Mentor: Genevieve Carpio

This seminar will look at the Telenovela genre, known as a soap opera in English, that is popular in Latin America. This course will specifically look at the development of the Telenovela genre in Mexico. We will analyze the cultural phenomenon and its history, as well as the impacts it's had on the region via a sociopolitical lens. The seminar will go in depth about the evolution of the genre from its first conception as a radio show to comic books like "fotonovelas" to the eventual daily television show that is most known. The different types of novelas that have come to result from the first novela in the 1960s to today will be discussed. The evolution of the genre by shifting cultural norms in Latin American societies will also be analyzed. The focus is Latin America, specifically Mexico but will also analyze inter-cultural connections formed. Notably by the production of telenovelas in other countries, most notably Turkey and South Korea. Mainly, the seminar will analyze how the telenovela has been used as a method of cultural diffusion and reflect the values of a nation. Furthermore, the seminar will discuss how telenovelas have been important for diasporas in learning about cultural nuances within the region, and production outside the region in places such as the United States.

Civic Engagement

Power, Privilege, and Perspectives: Examining Dynamics of Community Service in Los Angeles (2017)

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 systems of oppression and exploit marginalized groups for social benefit. Discussion with students involved with service work, with focus on social justice. Reflection on roles as volunteers and advocates and the privilege and power we are accorded as members of higher education. Underlying structure of community service, systematized inequities service work attempts to address, and how service work can perpetuate those inequities. Ways we can change current systems, including altering perspectives, challenging top down approaches, and redefining what it means to be an ally.

Classics

Out from Under: Women's Costuming in the Roman Empire (2022)

Student Facilitator: Caroline Lunt | Faculty Mentor: Sarah Beckmann

Fashion is a deliberate medium through which we communicate our values, status, and mood. It is both a daily choice, and a long-term investment. When one chooses what they wear, they are engaging with both their private, intimate selves and the practical societal expectations of where they live. Fashion is more than a superfluous process of ornamenting the body, and for Roman women the clothes they wore constituted a glamorous language of color and form. How does fashion coincide with political revolution? How do women's agencies reflect their political views? What did fashion look like, for all women, not just the elite? How do women negotiate their identity within the constraints of socially acceptable garmenting? What trends have we ignored because they don't fit the "classicizing" image of the natural Roman woman? *Out from Under: Women's Fashion in Ancient Rome (CL 88S)* will ask you to reflect on these questions, and more. This course prepares you to critically examine Roman fashion trends, their histories, and their significance as tools of both social rebellion and oppression. By considering both literary and artistic contexts, this course will introduce you to the world of Roman women's fashion during the time of the Empire. Assignments will be both analytic and creative.

Adapting Orpheus and Eurydice in the Modern Day (2024)

Student Facilitator: Pon Varshini Ravi | Faculty Mentor: Chris Johanson

Who is Orpheus, and what can it mean for him to look back? This course examines the reception of the popular Greek myth, Orpheus and Eurydice, through five multimedia adaptations from the late twentieth and twenty-first century. Students will look at the myth's appearances and transformations in *Black Orpheus* by Marcel Camus, "Goat Song" by Poul Anderson, *The Sandman* by Neil Gaiman, *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, and *Hadestown* by Anais Mitchell. We will interrogate why each work utilized the Orpheus myth and to what end, with special focuses on gender, class and capitalism, race and culture, myth (re)creation, and the reception of myth in science fiction. One to two weeks will be devoted to discussing each work and its position in the legacy of classical reception.

Women and Love in Greece and Rome (2025)

Student Facilitator: Meghana Gella | Faculty Mentor: Zachary Borst

Thousands of years later, readers are still turning to the words of Sappho and stories of love in ancient Greece and Rome to understand and empathize with the experience of desire. Equally as tormented about feelings of dejection, unreciprocated affection, unwanted obsession, and emotionless interactions, our modern experience of want within romance does not seem to be an entirely separate entity than the feelings experienced by women prior to the invention of dating apps (by several centuries).

Both ancient and modern time periods remain similar in their dependence on the female perspective and female experience to tell their stories. The material we have received in the present day regarding the female experience in ancient Greece and Rome is passed down from the oppressors of women themselves, as much of their histories come to modernity from the words of aristocratic men. Hypersexualized, disregarded, and underestimated, representations of women in classical societies were warped to capture their patriarchally perceived behavior rather than their actual experiences. This makes it extremely difficult to perceive the female perspective of romance and desire in antiquity without the pretense of misrepresentation.

The goal for this course is to speculate and learn to ask the impossible questions: What was the female experience in ancient Greece and Rome? – and – How do we uncover and speculate silenced perspectives without further undermining the individuality and voices of the oppressed?

We will read a range of primary source materials – Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Homeric Hymns, Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Plato's *Symposium*, etc. – and a range of modern materials – short stories, poems, articles, etc. – to complement, criticize, and reimagine the materials of antiquity. Mythological and historical reception plays an important role in the way these stories have morphed and appeared in our modern society. I hope that by the end of this course we will all be able to better apply modern research and thinking regarding women in time periods far before us in an empathetic and conscious way. Understanding the female experience in antiquity is key to understanding how classical societies functioned as a whole!

Communication Studies

Studies We, the Digital People: A Communications Analysis of Campaign '08 (2009)

Student Facilitator: Robert Schraff | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

This seminar will include analyses of marketing and branding strategies of the Obama, McCain and national Democratic and Republican efforts, as well as new communications strategies and technologies. Traditional communications analyses of design, commercials, rhetoric, theater, reporting, and messages will be briefly covered, as will the impact of the fragmentation of media and audiences and the shortening of news cycles.

Lights, Camera, Politics! The Role of Celebrities in Contemporary American Politics (2009)

Student Facilitator: Devna Shukla | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

In this course, students will examine the role of celebrities in American political campaigns. They will evaluate the 2008 election and identify specific examples of how political celebrities and celebrity politicians affected the campaign. Students will also consider the historical role of mass media in elections, the rise of celebrity activism, the intersection of imagery between both celebrities and politicians, and the public demand for such celebrity news (and how it varies systematically for different figures). They will conclude by forecasting the likely future development of the relationship between celebrity and politics.

Graffiti: The Art of Civil Disobedience (2009)

Student Facilitator: Scott Ishihara | Faculty Mentor: Paul Von Blum

Students will look at different forms of “graffiti” art (murals, stencil art, posters, stickers etc) and how they are a form of social and political resistance for conscious street artists. Because of its broad and sometimes “illegal” nature, graffiti has long been a controversial, overlooked and/or misunderstood form of art. The course will cover a wide range of works from all over the world -- including UCLA’s campus -- collected from books, the internet and personal photographs.

The Spin Zone: Cable News in Contemporary America (2010)

Student Facilitator: Gon Carpel | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

In a few short years, cable news has gone from nonexistence to what is arguably the most influential medium on our national conversation on politics and society as a whole. To better understand these influences, we will begin by establishing a strong foundation of media theory, economic analysis, and major modern media criticisms. Building on that foundation, we will then conduct an in- depth examination of Fox News, MSNBC and CNN. We will look at each of these three outlets’ background information, examining their history, ownership, current lineup, nature of their coverage, key on-air personalities, as well as the top off-air personalities. Finally, students will apply what they have learned by conducting a content analysis of the news presented on a specific outlet.

Business Strategies for Journalism in the Internet Age (2010)

Student Facilitator: Corinne Crockett | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

This seminar will inspire structured discussion of the future of the journalism industry in the Internet age, focusing on the “selling” of news. You will examine the newest models of the industry and their corresponding critiques. You will critically analyze these models and evaluate their viability in real-world application.

Read, Post, Tweet, OTTE: The Evolution of New Media #PoliticalCampaignStrategies (2012)

Student Facilitator: Sarah Michelle French | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

This course will provide students with a unique opportunity to learn about the theories of political campaign strategies and apply them as we analyze the 2012 presidential campaigns as they unfold! Students will study the history and evolution of the American campaign and voting process, with particular emphasis on the role of technology on grassroots mobilization. Each student will examine the 2012 presidential election process from both the consumer and producer viewpoint in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the campaign process in light of the new media age.

Trial by Media: A Close Look at Criminal Proceedings and its Relationship with the Media (2013)

Student Facilitator: Hasti Abangi | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

How did the “Dream Team” win the O.J. Simpson trial? Did the media have any influence on the Michael Jackson or Trayvon Martin cases? These are all examples of trials in which the attorneys allegedly used news coverage to influence the direction of their trials. Is this type of strategic behavior fair and just? This class seeks to discuss the publicity surrounding major criminal trials in order to discuss topics such as: the right of a citizen to a fair trial, journalistic responsibilities when covering trials, the ethical duty of an attorney not to prejudice a jury, and using the media to strategically influence a trial. Students will investigate these topics through classroom discussions, guest speakers, short written assignments, and one group project during the course of ten weeks.

Survey of Political Repression: How the State Conveys its Message (2016)

Student Facilitator: Albert Sarian | Faculty Mentor: Paul Von Blum

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.

Celebrity and Fan Culture (2017)

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.

American Women and Comedy (2018)

Student Facilitator: Claire Marchon | Faculty Mentor: Steven Peterson

This seminar examines American women comics from the mid-twentieth century through the present. The various ways in which women have been historically marginalized manifests in their comedy in numerous and complex ways. Highlighting the innovative works of Jackie 'Moms' Mabley, Carol Burnett, Tina Fey, and Ellen DeGeneres, this seminar intends to view comedy as a subversive tool used for women to define and redefine their roles in society.

The Smartphone: The Frenemy in Your Pocket (2019)

Student Facilitator: Michael Gannon | Faculty Mentor: Michael Suman

The smartphone can be our friend and our enemy, for it is both a blessing and a curse. We will study reasons for why this is, looking at negative communicative effects such as anxiety, cognitive deficit, decreased attention span, mobile dependency, and addiction, just to name a few. On the flip-side, we will look at positive effects such as increased communication, quicker information access, stronger connections to the outside world, new communication styles, multifunctionality, and others. Ultimately, we will discuss the history of the smartphone and its impact on individuals and society. Students will leave this class knowing more about the frenemy in their pocket.

The History of Sexology (2019)

Student Facilitator: Gillian Parker | Faculty Mentor: Michael Suman

Introduction to the history of sex research from the 19th century to the present. Topics include German origins of sex research, eugenics, homosexuality, female sexuality, sexual behavior, Kinsey reports, sex therapy, gender identity, feminism, the AIDs crisis and the current state of the discipline.

Introduction to Human-Centered Design in iOS Applications (2019)

Student Facilitator: Kevin Tan | Faculty Mentor: Paul Eggert

Good design is arguably as important for a product as the engineering underlying it. Cutting-edge technologies and mechanisms become meaningless if the consumers who they are intended for cannot intuitively utilize them; it's one thing to have a revolutionary creation, but it's another for it to be aesthetically pleasing and easy to use. In a world increasingly reliant on digital devices, what role has design played in setting Apple apart as the most successful tech company in the world? In this seminar, we will explore the enormous world of design through the lens of Apple's characteristic "human-centered design", and will discuss how it greatly influenced the success of both the iPhone and iOS. Students will learn basic principles of design before examining in depth how iOS applications have evolved over time. Finally, the seminar will culminate in a study of design in popular mobile applications such as Instagram and Youtube, a brief look into Google's "Material Design", and a project in which students design an app of their own.

Emotional Intelligence: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication (2022)

Student Facilitator: Phoebe Melikidse | Faculty Mentor: Karyl Kicenski

In this course, a repertoire of verbal and non-verbal communication theories will be applied to engage this invaluable skill. During the weekly 50-minute class sessions, students will learn several communication concepts such as paralanguage, the facial feedback hypothesis, and active listening. Subsequently, students will have the opportunity to apply the concepts through hands-on activities, developing their emotional intelligence in each class. Throughout the course, students and the facilitator will work together to create a supportive climate that encourages growth. By implementing theories, practice, and a positive mindset, it will be discovered how emotional intelligence skills can be the keys to success in work, relationships, well-being, and beyond.

Instagram & Influencers: Life in the Age of Social Media (2023)

Student Facilitator: Alex Kermani | Faculty Mentor: Tim Groeling

Whether keeping in touch with family and friends on Instagram, applying to jobs through LinkedIn, or mindlessly scrolling on TikTok, social media has become a pervasive part of modern life. While the reach of Social Media has only grown, we can approach these online platforms from a variety of perspectives to gain a greater understanding as to why we behave as we do on them. In this seminar we will approach a variety of social media phenomena from its effect on our mental health to meme culture. Through assigned readings, activities, and presentations, students will gain a thorough appreciation and greater understanding of how we as a society interact with social media, and how social media interacts with us in return.

Comparative Literature

What is an African story? Exploring the Gendered Literature of Sub-Saharan Africa (2014)

Student Facilitator: Oluwakanyinsola Ajayi | Faculty Mentor: Francoise Lionnet

Literature is the only thing that has consistently helped people see past themselves; Experience a world that is ultimately different from theirs. African Literature - in addition to its giving a voice to an otherwise silent continent - is especially apt in its taking human conflict and presenting it in the form of beautiful stories. There are many recurring themes in the literature but in this class, we will be focusing on one of them: the very relevant, gender & society. We will examine some representative African texts within the frames of gender roles & their representation, feminism and humanism. On occasion, we will refer to ideas of pan-Africanism, nationalism, transnationalism and post-colonialism. We will also partake in studies of genre: how are the forms of poetry, prose and drama manipulated to suit their purposes? The texts will flow into one another, thus forming the story of how African Literature has evolved to where it is now: trans-nationalist, and humanist.

Computer Science

Safety in the Cloud: Introduction to Cybersecurity (2017)

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

Privacy has always been an important aspect of our lives, but fewer 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. Preliminary introduction to the field of cybersecurity. Study of a variety of topics important for regular consumers of technology. Background knowledge in programming or computer science is not required.

Understanding Technology in Modern Society (2020)

Student Facilitator: Yvonne Chen | Faculty Mentor: Ryan Rosario

In today's technology-dominated society, it is more important than ever for anyone, regardless of their chosen career, to understand the mechanisms behind how many common technologies function. As society continues to make advances in artificial intelligence, biomedical engineering, or hardware and virtual reality, the gap between what the average person knows about their day-to-day technology-based services and what there is to know only continues to widen. This seminar aims to give nontechnical students a holistic overview of technology's core concepts: to think through the basics of how it works, why it was made the way it was, how it generates money, and what kind of social consequences it produces.

Introduction to AI Ethics - An Interdisciplinary Approach (2020)

Student Facilitator: Aaron Hui | Faculty Mentor: Ryan Rosario

As technology advances at an exponential rate, it is imperative that students begin thinking about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) will interact with and impact society at different facets of daily life, with the focus on ethical implication and its implementation within AI systems. The foresight of how important it is to regulate AI through the lens of ethical discussion and implementation is of paramount significance within the setting of the rapid development of AI and how it has already permeated our daily lives.

This course will allow students to gain an interdisciplinary introduction to classical and modern ethical theory and their implications on emerging autonomous technologies. The course will focus on the six ethical principles of AI identified by Microsoft: Fairness, Inclusiveness, Reliability, Transparency, Privacy, and Accountability.

This course will include introductions to the AI Robotics Ethics Society (AIRES), the UCLA Law AI Pulse program, the AI Ethics Lab, the USC Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society (CAIS), and more.

De-mystifying Computer Science (2022)

Student Facilitator: Zack Berger | Faculty Mentor: Amit Sabai

To most, computers are a black box technology. We use them every day, yet many people have no idea how they work! That understanding is hidden behind a rigorous engineering curriculum of coding and complicated math. As a result, computer science is inaccessible for a lot of people. The core questions of CS can be answered for anybody, regardless of their major. Demystifying Computer Science aims to provide an accessible and holistic understanding of computing for everyone. This is a technical class, but no technical background (or prerequisite) is required. Anybody can take this class without any computer science or STEM experience. Many of you may have prior knowledge of computing — we will contextualize that knowledge in the field of CS throughout the quarter. We will start at the beginning with bits (1s 0s) and work our way up together. By the end, we will have an end-to-end understanding of computing. Three questions will guide us throughout the course, and soon we'll be able to answer all of them.

Machine Learning 101 (2022)

Student Facilitator: Sidharth Ramanan | Faculty Mentor: Glenn Reinman

Machine Learning (ML) is becoming increasingly relevant across a variety of industries - chances are that some day you will be working on a project that leverages ML in some capacity. Knowing the fundamentals of ML can better contextualize your work and make it more fulfilling once you have the full picture. It's an exciting field that's growing very fast, so you will be able to understand and discuss new trends and applications even with technical people. It's a very intellectually fulfilling subject. My focus is to uplift those with no background on ML. The only prerequisite is an open and present mind. Moreover, this class will remain light on math and programming since my goal is to emphasize high-level ideas in the class.

Technology of X-files: Aliens and Paranormal (2022)

Student Facilitator: Aditya Mishra | Faculty Mentor: Achuta Kadambi

The primary focus of this course is the same as the primary focus of the X-Files, the “Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence” (SETI). Near the end of the course we will be having discussions about how computer science is used to debunk certain findings of paranormal phenomena. This particular field of research requires a broad knowledge of signal processing, (astrophotography, computer vision) and distributed computing - all of which we will be covered in this course. A large part of this course will be focused on the philosophical implications of Extraterrestrial Search and in particular, first-contact. No previous knowledge of computer science is required for this course as this course serves as an introduction to these topics.

Earth, Planetary and Space Sciences

Applied Astrobiology: Design your Own Alien Microbe (2022)

Student Facilitator: Emery Grabill-Bland | Faculty Mentor: Tina Treude

In this course, we will walk through the basics of planetary science and exoplanet studies that relate to astrobiology. Then, we will explore the biological pathways that microbes can take to survive in average and extreme conditions on Earth. Throughout the course not only will we be covering content, but we will be actively engaging in discussion and about the synthesis of these two branches of science. The course will be structured as a ‘flipped-classroom’ which means discussion and problem solving occur in the classroom, while lecture content is covered at home. I personally have had wonderful experiences with learning in flipped-classroom style and I am excited that we will also be able to use our in classroom time to discuss the topics that you all find most interesting, together.

All of the content will be presented at a level that is accessible to students with absolutely no background in STEM at UCLA.

Ecology and Environmental Biology

The Most Extreme: Exploring Extremophiles, the Origin of Life, and Search for Life in the Universe (2018)

Student Facilitator: Elizabeth Vanderwall | Faculty Mentor: Clifford Brunk

From hot springs and hydrothermal vents to acidic caves and polar ice, extremophiles are organisms that thrive under our planet's most extreme environments. These organisms not only have incredible biological properties that have been used in biotechnological inventions, industrial purposes, and bioremediation efforts, but they also expand our definition of how life can exist and are an active area of research for scientists interested in modeling life on the early earth and life on other planets. This course provides an appreciation for the astonishing diversity of life that exists on our planet.

Animal Consciousness & Ethics (2021)

Student Facilitator: Lynnea Doshi | Faculty Mentor: Leryn Gorlitsky

In this seminar, students will be exploring the emerging science of animal consciousness in order to thoughtfully assess the current treatment of animals across industries and on an individual level. The prevalent ideology of human superiority over non-human animals on the basis of intelligence, consciousness and capacity for emotion will be examined, and students will seek to understand the implications that this ideology has on human behavior and treatment of the world around us. The potential of our growing knowledge of animal consciousness to address major social issues such as racism, sexism and speciesism will further be explored through a biosocial approach that combines understanding with implementation. Throughout the course, students will have the opportunity to meet with several experts in various fields to better understand different perspectives on animal consciousness.

Urban Ecology: Coexistence in Urban Landscapes (2022)

Student Facilitator: Michael Yu | Faculty Mentor: Pamela Yeh

When the subject of nature is brought up, one often thinks about the lush rainforests of the Amazon or the breathtaking mountain range of the Himalayas. However, often overlooked are the wildlife that cohabit the urban environment alongside us. From the crows and ravens that peer down at us from telephone poles to the squirrels that cross our paths, the urban environment provides habitat for a myriad of different species. Who else calls Los Angeles their home? What are some of the challenges they face living in this human-dominated landscape? What are some of the adaptations that allow them to dwell in this novel urban ecosystem?

This course seeks to allow students to seek out the answer to these questions and share their experiences in this journey. The first third of the course will introduce students to the broad discipline that is Urban Ecology and the biodiversity within urban ecosystems, with an emphasis on the city of LA. The second portion of the course will address the many challenges urban wildlife face and some of the adverse impacts that our activities have had on our non-human neighbors. Finally, in the last few weeks, we will dive into the fascinating adaptations that allow some wildlife to flourish in this environment and things that are being done to make cities a more suitable place for wildlife. Through a series of readings, discussions, interactive activities, and lectures, this course aims to allow students to gain a connection to and appreciation for the wildlife that surrounds them every single day.

Economics

Innovations Against Poverty (2007)

Student Facilitator: Nafis Atiqullah | Faculty Mentor: Peirre-Olivier Weill

This seminar will explore microfinance, a growing field that seeks to provide lending, banking, and insurance services to the poor. At its best, microfinance has been celebrated for fostering entrepreneurship, offering “a new perspective on business as a force for social good,” and helping many out of poverty. At its worst, microfinance has been criticized as “the latest development fad” with “ridiculously ambitious” goals that actually divert resources away from social-benefit and traditional aid programs. This seminar will explore microfinance institutions and their varied impacts across Asia, South America, Africa, and the United States.

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is: An Economic Look at Food Systems in America (2010)

Student Facilitator: Neba Bazaj | Faculty Mentor: Matthew Kahn

Food production and consumption patterns in the U.S. have changed more rapidly in the past 100 years than at any other point in history. Farms that once produced a variety of crops are now dedicated to a single crop, and home-made food is no longer the only option. The advent of industrial agriculture, changing lifestyles and growing incomes are just a few of the factors commonly cited for these changes. The next 50 years are likely to be just as tumultuous as the “food movement” encourages Americans to find their way back to the land. This course aims to examine America’s food system through an economic lens; how changing constraints, changing incentives and the desire for efficiency have shaped the current food system.

Bitcoin and the Future of Currency (2014)

Student Facilitator: Alex Rochlin | Faculty Mentor: Aaron Tornell

Money: some say it's the root of all evil, others argue it makes the world go round, and some think just think that more of it leads to more problems. Whatever its consequences, money has been a cornerstone of human civilization for 5000 years, facilitating transactions, measuring worth and storing value. This course will examine the newest monetary innovation: Bitcoin, a decentralized digital crypto-currency. Founded in 2007, Bitcoin has recently experienced rapid growth, rising from \$20/Bitcoin at the beginning of 2013 to over \$1000 by the end. However, there is growing concern Bitcoin may face increased regulatory pressures from the US government and may simply be a speculative bubble that will soon pop. As a class, we will begin by looking at whether Bitcoin fulfills the requirements to be considered a currency. We will then examine historical speculative bubbles and determine as a class if Bitcoin is currently a bubble or if it is simply experiencing rapid, sustainable growth. Finally, we will examine the challenges and opportunities facing Bitcoin in the future, and debate if Bitcoin will ever achieve its goal of being an accepted mainstream currency. This course will feature guest lecturers who will offer more detailed information on subjects like the operations of Bitcoin and the Foreign exchange market. Students will be expected to participate in this course through class discussions, debates and two short research presentations.

Deviations from Rationality: An Introduction to Behavioral Economics (2020)

Student Facilitator: Isabella (Izzy) Sumner | Faculty Mentor: Pierre-Olivier Weill

Have you ever made a decision on a gut feeling? Should you trust your gut? When most students hear the term 'economics,' they envision complicated formulas that model rational thought. Yet, there is an entire field of economics that is dedicated to studying irrational behavior. Behavioral economics uses methodologies to analyze how psychology affects people's economic behavior and decision-making processes. This course will examine how cognitive biases can influence--and often inhibit--people's reasoning abilities. It will also introduce basic economic modelling to provide a framework for thinking about rational and irrational thought.

Education

Autism and Asperger Syndrome in the Media: Through the Eyes of Individuals with Autism (2008)

Student Facilitator: Ani Khachoyan | Faculty Mentor: Connie Kasari

Students will be looking at the social, communicative, sensory, and learning world of individuals with autism by using various media sources such as books, documentaries, movies, and websites. Also debated are the various issues on autism such as statistics on autism, campaigns aiming to cure autism, and special education.

Making Inequality: The Hidden Curriculum of Schools (2009)

Student Facilitator: Alma Flores | Faculty Mentor: Kris Gutierrez

This course will examine the hidden curriculum that functions at the K-12 level. The hidden curriculum refers to the way schools “produce race, class, and gender hierarchies, and reproduce conservative ideology” through factors such as tracking, lack of teacher diversity, and a Eurocentric curriculum to name only a few. The course will work with the acknowledgement that the hidden curriculum presents underrepresented students with barriers to higher education.

Access, Agitation, and Litigation: The State of Affirmative Action in United States Colleges (2016)

Student Facilitator: Arthur Wang | Faculty Mentor: Robert Teranishi

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.

Embracing Identity: Learn About Your Ancestry (2017)

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

Have you ever wondered who you are or how you got here? Exploration of these universal questions through learning about one’s ancestral roots and family’s heritage. Heritage, be it national, cultural, or family, is an endowment of unique sets of historical knowledge; but foremost, heritage is one’s history. Learning about our family’s history is essential to understanding ourselves, basic humanity, and diversity. Students construct their family tree using resources such as Ancestry.com and an oral history approach. Oral history workshop to provide students opportunity to obtain information through interviewing family members. Students gain a better understanding of their identity through learning about their ancestral roots, and their family’s heritage.

Understanding the Achievement Gap (2018)

Student Facilitator: Victoria Vezaldenos | Faculty Mentor: Kimberley Gomez

Policy makers and educators frequently frame the US education system as an equal playing field for all hardworking students. However, additional factors can cause many students to fall behind. This course explores how influential factors limit the educational achievement of our peers, community, and family members, including negative stereotypes, cultural knowledge, socioeconomic status, and social connections. Through careful analysis, interactive learning, hands-on activities, and thoughtful discussions regarding the intersections of race, class, gender, students examine their positionality, learn to acknowledge educational privileges, understand obstacles students overcome, and build skills to create change.

Netflix n' Instill: Education through the Screen (2019)

Student Facilitator: Nosayaba Omorogieva | Faculty Mentor: Kim Gomez

What happens when fiction reflects reality? If we took an in-depth look at popular TV shows and movies, what would we find? Do our identities shape how we consume and interpret screen media? Through exploration, analysis, and diligent Netflix n' Chill, this course aims to answer these questions. This seminar is an introduction to the commercialization of historical events, relatable circumstances, and social issues through Netflix and other popularized streaming services. Throughout this course, we will be analyzing and discussing popularized screen media as educational entertainment or 'edutainment'. Using a curated selection of streamable shows and movies with historical or relatable subplots, we will attempt to identify and understand the intersection between media and holistic education.

Caring in Our Own Contexts: A Case Study By You (2021)

Student Facilitator: Lezel Legados | Faculty Mentor: Federica Raia

This seminar works to engage students in critical examinations, discussions, dialogues, and analysis on what it means to care for the Other in our interactions, regardless of our chosen fields and career plans. Utilizing pedagogy from education to study care as a necessary act within many societal settings, the goal of the course is to work with students to challenge each other to engage in introspection of their own lives, identities, interests, and experiences to share new thoughts and create new definitions of what it means to care. Students will identify and collect their own data on care within their lives and build upon their initial data with assignments of analysis, contextualization, interviews of practitioners of care, and secondary collection of data. This will develop into a personal case study into care and practice that will empower students to own their understandings of care within their lives and ground the dissection of theories and key terms around care in their own contexts to help them understand why care matters in their future aspirations.

Kids, School, and COVID-19: K-12 Education in Time of Pandemic (2022)

Student Facilitator: Chris Mauerman | Faculty Mentor: Anna Markowitz

This course will examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the United States' K-12 students and public education system. This class will take an intersectional approach to examining how various aspects of student wellness were, and continue to be, affected by: school closures and reopenings, virtual schooling, and changes to federal and state policy + funding over the past two years. Specifically, students will be reviewing such topics as learning in a virtual space, standardized tests, early childhood education, physical & nutritional health, mental & social health, and federal & state investments as they relate to the pandemic. School responses to COVID-19 are very much ongoing, as the implications of the crisis are being continuously discovered and addressed. This class strives to anchor itself in pre-pandemic trends, but will also respond as much as possible to ongoing changes. For each of these topics, students will discuss what happened during the pandemic; learn how it is consistent/inconsistent with ongoing challenges to educational equity; for whom it is of particular importance; and how it has been addressed by federal, state, district, or school policy. Students will be encouraged to share their own perspectives/experiences and collaborate to imagine how policy may be harnessed to address issues of educational inequity.

Educational & Psychological Impacts of Summer Camps on Children & Adolescents (2024)

Student Facilitator: Idella Smolyar | Faculty Mentor: Anne BlackstockBernstein

In the span of just a summer, kids and teens can create lifelong bonds that take months or years in all other settings. Why do summer camps have this magic? Do summer camps have any educational benefits? In this course, we will examine the behavioral, social, and academic impact of summer camps through the use of research and articles. We will explore many things such as the overall benefits of sending kids to summer camps, sleepaway vs day camps, and specialty types of camps. Moreover, we will be looking at the psychological impact of being an adolescent who's tasked with leading a group of kids as a counselor and even the implications of whether summer camps help aid learning loss over the summer. In groups, we will also have the opportunity to create our ideal summer camps and imagine the program and layout. Students will most importantly have time to share their own experiences as we strive to answer why summer camps become such a unique learning and development environment.

Gamification in Education: Making Learning Fun (2024)

Student Facilitator: Sharon Zhao | Faculty Mentor: Gregory Chung

Do you like playing kahoot and jeopardy during class? Did you like to play Minecraft when you were a kid? Do you think League of Legends can educate you? Throughout the course, different stages of educational game design will be introduced, including design principles based on theories of learning and motivation, gamification strategy application, game effectiveness evaluation, use of games to measure knowledge and skills, and user testing. By the end of this course, students are expected to design their own educational game or present an existing game based on the methods they learned. Readings, discussions, and peer-reviews will be used to guide students and help them make iterations for their proposed projects. Students will also be evaluating the benefits and challenges of their proposed education games after the design process. Students from all majors are welcome to participate, and they are encouraged to apply course learnings to real world educational scenarios.

Electrical and Computer Engineering

Black Mirror: Technology and its Role in Dystopian Societies (2020)

Student Facilitator: Daniel DongChan Ahn | Faculty Mentor: Vwani Roychowdhury

Technology has become an increasingly integral part of our lives. As we grow more dependent on it, we should consider its negative effects and how those effects may come to have unintended consequences in the future. In particular, we should be familiar with the role technology plays in the formation and perpetuation of dystopian societies. In this course, we will critically examine technologies presented in episodes of Black Mirror and the effects they have on the societies built around them. The course will be organized into units covering aspects of society that are similarly affected by runaway technology. By understanding scenarios in which these technologies are abused or cause unintended consequences for their users, we hope to be able to think about how these situations can be avoided in real life and identify parallels with current issues in technology.

Internet and Free Speech (2022)

Student Facilitator: Elsa Barland Dubil | Faculty Mentor: John Villasenor

This seminar takes a detailed look at how the Internet has changed political discussion surrounding free speech- from censorship to content moderation- as well as examined many proposed solutions. Taught from an engineering and technology background, this class will look at both the how and why of these issues and will equip you with a new understanding of engineering and public policy. No background in the subject matter is required. It is my goal that everyone who leaves this class feels more knowledgeable and confident in their own civic engagement surrounding free speech, privacy and big tech.

English

From Anansi to Captain Jack Sparrow: Tales of the Trickster (2007)

Student Facilitator: Peter Aoun | Faculty Mentor: Joseph Nagy

What do Captain Jack Sparrow, Anansi the Spider, and a mischievous monkey have in common? They are all tricksters. The trickster is an archetypal character found in stories from numerous cultures and time periods. Although the trickster may be mischievous, rude, and malevolent, the trickster may also be witty, entertaining, and benevolent. This seminar will look at the trickster as presented in stories from diverse cultures. We will examine how each version of the trickster reflects its culture of origin and study the differing views of the trickster through stories and critical readings to find commonalities and develop an idea of the archetypal trickster.

Taking Bestsellers Seriously: Harry Potter, Ender, and Robert Langdon vs. Those Stuffed-Shirt Yale Professors (2008)

Student Facilitator: Roberta Wolfson | Faculty Mentor: Mark McGurl

Can popular bestselling novels be incorporated as legitimate contributions into the academic discourse? Is genre fiction trash or literature? This seminar answers these questions by looking at Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, The DaVinci Code, and Ender's Game and examining their social, political, cultural, and religious implications.

Telling Truth with a Slant: Reading and Writing Contemporary Creative Non-Fiction (2009)

Student Facilitator: Jenae Cohn | Faculty Mentor: Reed Wilson

Creative non-fiction combines descriptive prose, distinctive narrative voices, and subjective insights. In this course, students will explore contemporary creative nonfiction's different styles and forms: memoir, travel literature, humor writing, and literary journalism. Great creative nonfiction not only explores and examines places and ideas, but also provides insight into the writer and allows the writer creative freedom to explore inward and outward experience.

A Rose by Any Other Name: Representing the Wars of the Roses through Literature (2010)

Student Facilitator: Anna Wylie | Faculty Mentor: A.R. Braunmuller

In this seminar, students will look at retellings of famous battles as well as character assessments of the main players in the Wars of the Roses, and how these accounts change depending on who is in power when they are written. Students will also discuss the power of literature as state propaganda, and how it affected the perceptions of these events when they were written as well as their current influence on modern understanding of this time period. Furthermore, students will consider how to determine which writings are accurate and which are not, or even if this task is possible.

Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales and Folk Tales Across Cultures (2010)

Student Facilitator: Nancy Giang | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

Why do we read fairy tales and folk tales as children? Why have they been able to withstand the transience of oral and literary tradition? Why do we still cherish these stories as part of our heritage? This course studies these fanciful stories in order to reveal the literary and cultural reasons for their permanence despite iterations and translations. We will read selected works from various cultural traditions which will be translated into an English version that still maintains the lexical integrity of the original pieces, in order to facilitate discussion and comparison of them. The seminar is, however, not focused solely on analyzing stories of previous eras, but is also designed to trace the implications of plot, style, and other literary techniques of the tales through subsequent periods.

Tweeted on My Facebook Friend's Blog: The Dialogue and Practice of Social Media (2011)

Student Facilitator: Alyssa Bricklin | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

This class recognizes Social Media as a behavior more significant than just following your favorite band on Twitter. In the second half of the past decade, Social Media has rapidly grown into an undeniably powerful force in the marketplace. Companies and organizations are using Social Media not only as a way to communicate information to their consumers, but also to foster relationships with them. Through class discussion we will begin to think critically about our role as consumers of this medium and explore the possibilities of someday being producers of it ourselves. The course starts with a theoretical evaluation of Social Media as a dialogue, and then we move to learning about the practical application of Social Media – identifying the various tools and examining case studies of large businesses, small businesses, and nonprofits. The class is designed so that we will be interacting with Social Media along the way.

Tralfamadorians, Jabberwockies, Whatchamacallits, and The Onion: When Nonsense Makes Sense (2011)

Student Facilitator: Michelle Mikolajczyk | Faculty Mentor: Reed Wilson

In this seminar we will read selected works of Lewis Carroll, Roald Dahl, Shel Silverstein, Kurt Vonnegut, and contributors to The Onion. The course is designed to show how these authors connect to one another by how they emphasize the limits of mankind's physical abilities and understanding. We will explore how they critique aspects of Human Services such as those relating to medical and pedagogical (e.g. doctor, teachers, etc.) fields through vague statements, fabricated vocabulary, and satirical rhetoric (hyperbole, puns, and wit). By the end of the seminar, we will untangle the authors' language to reveal a string of interpretable linear thoughts, and use the idea of time (both time passing and time as construct) to explain the nonsensical (time as the healer of wounds and time as the discoverer of the unknown) that pervades the entire selection of readings.

“Not Gay – Just a Fairy”: The Evolution of Queer Representations in American Comic Books (2011)

Student Facilitator: Kelsey Sharpe | Faculty Mentor: Christine Chism

Batman and Robin jokes aside, there is a considerable overlap in the comic book and queer communities; this course will trace the evolution of queerness in comics, largely in terms of the mainstream American comic book industry. We'll start with *The Temptation of the Innocent* and the Comics Code Authority, and move to queer coding in mainstream comics, incorporation of homosexual (or obliquely homosexual) characters into the mainstream, and eventually the development and success of explicitly LGBT titles. The class will largely move chronologically, but occasional class seminars will be set aside for special themes or topics.

Allure of the Medieval: The Middle Ages in Popular Culture (2012)

Student Facilitator: Daryl Chan | Faculty Mentor: Chris Chism

This seminar explores the reasons for revisiting the medieval with excerpts from literature, movies, TV series, novels etc. Each week, we will delve into one particular characteristic of the medieval, dissecting each topic as we find out what titillates us, in an attempt to reach a broader conclusion for our fascination with the Middle Ages. The topics will progress from the fantastical Middle Ages, transition to the ubiquitous Arthurian legends, and finally visit themes more pertinent to our culture today such as heroism. We will read Umberto Eco's essays on the revisitation of the Middle Ages. Then, we will examine contemporary portrayals of the Middle Ages in the form of "Merlin," "Camelot," "Game of Thrones," "Lord of the Rings," and other popular works, identifying medieval traits that perhaps still ring true today. We will also compare and contrast some of the popular works with medieval literature to explore the uniqueness of the Middle Ages and what makes the medieval so attractive that we keep on returning to them.

The Course To Rule Them All: Exploring J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (2012)

Student Facilitator: Cody Geib | Faculty Mentor: Jonathan Grossman

J. R. R. Tolkien's three-volume novel *The Lord of the Rings* is perhaps one of the most well-known and beloved books produced in the last century. It has consistently been ranked first in "Books of the Twentieth Century" polls and has been adapted into a blockbuster film trilogy. However, after its publication in the mid-1950s, most scholars dismissed LOTR as fanciful escapism. Even many of Tolkien's colleagues at the University of Oxford found it disappointing that Tolkien spent so much time on his stories rather than contributing to his own academic field. But as time passed and the novel's popularity soared, scholars began to consider Tolkien's fictional work to be worthy of study. And that is where our journey begins.

The Aesthetics of Violence from Shakespeare to Tarantino (2012)

Student Facilitator: Srbui Karapetian | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum Huebbs

For centuries violence and art have struck a telling relationship in the work of the author-artist; while the author explores violence thematically in a text, so too does he utilize violence to draw attention to the form of his art. Our class situates violence within the context of the “aesthetic experience” that an author-artist creates for a viewer-reader, exploring the cultural, political, historical, and formal issues that might inform various treatments of violence in a text. Our seminar does not follow historical chronology; instead it seeks to find overlap across historical periods and art forms (i.e. drama, cinema, poetry, and fiction) in the treatment of violence by grounding discussion around one or more “aesthetic modes” with which the text(s) seem preoccupied.

Red State Realism: White American Poverty in Contemporary American Literature, Film, and Song (2013)

Student Facilitator: Kevin Mosby | Faculty Mentor: Reed Wilson

Call them “crackers,” “rednecks,” or “white trash.” They’re the butt of jokes and the target of slurs, parodies, and social satires. But from the grotesque stories of Flannery O’Connor to the grisly novels of Harry Crews, contemporary tales from the South have sought to provide dirt-poor white Americans an unrestrained and genuine voice. This course will examine the portrayal of poor white Southerners in contemporary literature, film, and song. Topics will include the deterioration of high culture in the modern South, “the grotesque” in Southern Gothic literature, and the problematization of “white trash” stereotypes. The course will pay particular attention to themes of violence and sexuality within the assigned texts, which may include works by William Faulkner, Barry Hannah, Dorothy Allison, Tracy Letts, and Townes Van Zandt. Students considering this course are strongly encouraged to possess an interest in white studies, in the culture of the American South, and in literature that depicts stark accounts of lascivious sex and physical brutality.

Growing Up in the South: 20th-Century Bildungsromans (2013)

Student Facilitator: Katherine Neipris | Faculty Mentor: Joseph Dimuro

This course examines Bildungsromans – coming-of-age tales – set against the backdrop of the microcosmic twentieth-century American South. As the protagonists of our texts struggle to acclimate to the adult world, the south tries to adjust to new social changes, standards, and stigmas. The individual is plunged into a tug-of-war between nature and nurture, torn between various forces that vie for control: familial expectations, environmental pressures, self-determination. The separate yet interconnected patterns of development experienced by each protagonist echo the region’s own struggle to redefine its identity. By examining the multifaceted south through the lens of coming-of-age tales, we will isolate and analyze the variables that influence both the development of the south and of the characters: family structure, racial relations, and the definition of what it means to be “southern” play a unique role in each text.

Fantasy Geography: The Physical Space of Fictional Worlds (2013)

Student Facilitator: Amy Sherrard | Faculty Mentor: Matthew Fisher

Have you ever dreamed about a wizard knocking on your door, showing you a map, and inviting you on a dragon-hunting journey to a looming mountain range in the North? You're not the only one—fantasy geography has become a major part of the genre and even bleeds into other areas of literature and culture. This seminar covers well-known fantasy maps in the context of cartographic principles, basic geography, and literary value. We will spend time with textual work by J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin, and transition into other spatial manifestations of fantasy, like video games, open-source maps, fan-fiction, and roleplaying. After a quarter of learning, you get the chance to apply your knowledge to a fictional mapping project that lets you discover more about the world of your choice.

Worlds Enough & Time: Time Travel in Fiction (2014)

Student Facilitator: Anna Galachyan | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

Time travel narratives have been a mainstay of science fiction since the early 20th century and comprise a sub-genre of their own, with unique tropes, clichés, and mythologies. In this seminar, we will dive headfirst into some of the most iconic time travel stories (and a few that are more obscure) and explore the various ways this motif challenges or reinforces different perceptions of time, order, and personal agency. In addition to our study of time travel narratives as a separate unit, we will discuss how they fit into the larger world of storytelling. Material will include literature, film, and television from the mid-20th century to today.

Lewis to Lovecraft: Fantasy Literature and Belief Systems (2014)

Student Facilitator: Stephen Stewart | Faculty Mentor: Joseph Nagy

Heroes, wizards and dragons lurk beneath the pages of many fantasy novels. While these works create bold new worlds for a reader to explore, they often simultaneously draw upon concepts and ideas from our world, especially belief systems. Fantasy provides an appropriate location to explore the construction and dissemination of belief systems by juxtaposing familiar institutions or concepts with foreign, far-fetched, and daringly creative ideas. From H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu to C.S. Lewis' Aslan, fantasy explores and critiques the nature of belief and what our understanding of belief systems should be. This discussion will even draw from J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth and J.K. Rowling's Hogwarts, as both authors and readers of these popular works project their own visions onto these fantastic though not explicitly religious worlds. We will explore the texts of several major fantasy authors and analyze religious allusions, allegory, and undertones in their work. Students will demonstrate an in-depth critical understanding of various excerpts from novels and short stories through discussion and will also have a chance to explore and analyze a text of their own choosing for a short paper or create a short story of their own.

American Bards—Who Are Our Voices? (And What Do They Say?) (2015)

Student Facilitator: Samantha Allan | Faculty Mentor: Michael Cohen

American songwriters, poets, throughout the twentieth century who we consider cultural and subcultural icons, how we remember them, why— includes Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Maya Angelou, Joni Mitchell, Tupac, others.

Economic Influences in “Game of Thrones” (2015)

Student Facilitator: Mary Haithcoat | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

Examination of George R.R. Martin’s “A Game of Thrones” through the lens of economic theory.

Looking Forward, Thinking Ahead—Futurisms in Literature, Film, and Other Media (2015)

Student Facilitator: Shawn Zhang | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

The simultaneous desirability and temporal unavailability of the future has made it one of the most sought after objects in the human pursuit. We have tried time and again to imagine, predict, and actively create futures of our own choosing. What do these attempts say about ourselves, our values, and our obsessions? Examining a variety of sources taken from a broad spectrum of times and places, this class seeks to understand the whats, whys, and hows of our eternal fascination with the future.

The Rise of the Anti-Hero (2016)

Student Facilitator: Sarah Abolail | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum Huebels

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 antihero 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.”

Don't Panic!: A Student's Guide to Humor in Science Fiction (2016)

Student Facilitator: Ariel Reider | Faculty Mentor: Ursula Heise

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.

Young, Wild, and Free: Themes and Topics in Young Adult Literature (2016)

Student Facilitator: Dorothy Yim | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

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.

Speak Write Now: Performance as Literary Analysis (2017)

Student Facilitator: Ashley Hope | Faculty Mentor: Eric Jager

Roles of actor, director, author, reader, and spectator, using performance as a critical lens for understanding literature. Return to the stage and revisit the critical role of performance in understanding literature. Examination of how writers and performers stage meaning for different audiences and mediums. Consideration of questions, such as how performance is an act of literary analysis and how performance creates meaning text alone cannot convey.

The Three Amigos: Introduction to Contemporary Mexican Cinema (2017)

Student Facilitator: Tyra Kristiansen | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huebels

Mexican directors have received the Academy Award for Best Directing for the past three years, Alfonso Cuarón in 2013 and 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. Study of prominent Spanish language films that have transformed Mexican cinema, Cuarón's *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), Iñárritu's *Amores Perros* (2000), and Del Toro's *El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006). Exploration of common themes across these films, such as transnationalism, machismo, Chicana archetypes, and racial identity formation in relation to contemporary Mexico, while distinguishing differences of narrative form and style.

Black Pleasure / Black Pain (2017)

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

Debates within black feminist scholarship have been dedicated to issues of objectification, body commodification, and sexual agency. This discourse has largely centered on whether or not embodiments of perceived sexual excess contest or remain complicit in histories of rendering black women's bodies as deviant. Complexities of black women's intimate, erotic, and sexual lives, by looking beyond binary discourses of agency/oppression and pleasure/pain. 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? Selections from fields of black feminist pleasure politics, queer of color critique, black cultural studies, and black performance theory.

Complicity/Possibility: Recent Shifts in U.S. Fiction (2017)

Student Facilitator: Rachael Lee | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huebels

American culture is frequently imagined as doomed to a wasteland of meaningless consumption. This crisis has led recent U.S. fiction writers to explore alternative modes of meaning and value that might point us to better possibilities. Study of Tao Lin's Taipei (2013) with topical articles to explore ambiguous relationship between complicity and possibility in current literary modes. Topics include reconceptualizations of space and time, complications of human memory in the digital era, consumerism and Millennial generation, cultures of depression, and value of experimental literature.

Through the Eyes of the Bystander: Breaking Perceptions of Oppression (2017)

Student Facilitator: Melanie Taing | Faculty Mentor: Christopher M. Mott

Should there be limits to scientific inquiry? What is the relationship between human rationality and human emotion? Examination of how Mary Shelley attempts to answer these questions in Frankenstein, how Hollywood does so, and how these questions relate to our world today.

Frankenstein, Monster or Maker: Unlocking the Inner Romantic (2017)

Student Facilitator: Tyra Kristiansen | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huebels

Mexican directors have received the Academy Award for Best Directing for the past three years, Alfonso Cuarón in 2013 and 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. Study of prominent Spanish language films that have transformed Mexican cinema, Cuarón's Y Tu Mamá También (2001), Iñárritu's Amores Perros (2000), and Del Toro's El Laberinto del Fauno (2006). Exploration of common themes across these films, such as transnationalism, machismo, Chicana archetypes, and racial identity formation in relation to contemporary Mexico, while distinguishing differences of narrative form and style.

There's a Catch: An Exploration of Satire Through Catch 22 (2017)

Student Facilitator: David Veta | Faculty Mentor: Christopher M. Mott

Exploration of satire in contemporary English literature through the lens of Joseph Heller's World War II novel, *Catch 22*. Students read and comment on absurd and satirical elements and discuss elements found particularly funny and interesting. Discussion of contemporary relevance of themes explored by Heller (e.g., insanity, bureaucracy, capitalism, morbidity).

Animation and Environmentalism (2018)

Student Facilitator: Kathleen Knight | Faculty Mentor: Joseph Nagy

This seminar focuses on the evolution of human attitudes toward the environment as portrayed in 20th and 21st century animated shorts and feature films. Focuses on history and artistic developments in animation, the cultural attitudes films reflect, and representations of environmental issues in US and foreign animated films through screenings, readings, and discussions. Emphasis on how animated works have influenced modern concepts of the natural world, and the implications of future environmental challenges.

From Grandmaster Flash to Bad and Boujee: The Rise and Evolution of Mainstream Hip-Hop (2018)

Student Facilitator: Andrew Hean | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

Looking at the current songs in the Billboard Hot 100, the most streamed songs on music streaming services, or just listening to popular radio, one thing is clear—hip-hop has a dominant place in popular music and popular culture, becoming the new “Rock and Roll” of this day and age of style, technology and social media. This course will dive deeper into what makes hip-hop what it is today: a movement, a music genre, a culture, and much more. Seminar will look at the complex history behind today’s catchy beats, controversial subject matter, and struggles of many hip-hop artists and figures.

The Devil's in the Details: A Survey of Literary Depictions of Satan (2019)

Student Facilitator: Collin Wolters | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum Huebels

Satan has been a popular cultural figure for hundreds of years. And, through this duration, depictions of Satan have been as varied as the media in which they've been found. Books, poems, paintings, movies, television shows, and music all feature their own canonical depictions of Satan, with all iterations representing different moments in history. However, despite the diversity of these depictions, Satan consistently personifies evil. This seminar will focus, then, on the details of these literary and cultural depictions and how such details suggest different ideas of what is evil or bad. The course will explore questions such as “How does this depiction respond to those before it?” and “How does this depiction use certain details to represent immorality or evil?”

Dear Friend, Old Friend, Good Friend: Male Friendship in Shakespeare (2022)

Student Facilitator: Justin Huwe | Faculty Mentor: Colleen Jaurretche

In this seminar, we will examine how friendships between men are depicted in two Shakespeare plays: *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet*. These plays will serve as case studies as we seek to better understand the inner workings of male friendship. These plays present a perfect opportunity to critically analyze how male friends navigate their emotions. Specifically, we will learn how to use a “male friendship lens” when reading literary texts.

The Space Between: Tropes of Mixedness in Contemporary Mixed-Race Literature (2023)

Student Facilitator: Emily Kim | Faculty Mentor: Caroline Streeter

Welcome to Mixed Race Literature! This seminar will survey contemporary mixed-race literature with the goal of answering the question: What is mixed-race literature, and what are the implications of the presentations of mixedness they contain? The course will introduce why it may be difficult to define mixed race literature, explore scholarship surrounding presentations of mixedness, and present a brief contextual history of mixedness in the U.S. Each week will correspond to a different theme or pattern of representation: binary vs. fluid representations of mixed identity, mixed characters’ association with tragedy, mixed people as symbols for a better world, as shapeshifters, as cultural “bridges,” and as metaphors for cultural crossings. The course will discuss the one drop rule and blood quantum laws, as well as how mixedness is associated with alienation. Finally, we will return to our opening definition of mixed-race literature and seek to redefine it based on what we have learned. Alongside these assigned readings, you’ll be exposed to excerpted scholarship in class to provide critical frameworks through which to analyze and critique representations of mixedness in the readings.

Splitting the Panel: Experimental Graphic Literature Seminar (2024)

Student Facilitator: Anbu Vajuravel | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

A general but sufficiently detailed overview of certain comic artists and forms that can be classified as ‘experimental’ in their use of mixed media, alternative structure and general subversion of classical sequential art. Artists and writers covered include Zoe Thorogood, Trung Le Ngyuen, Neil Gaiman and Amruta Patil amongst others. Consideration of labels like “comic,” “graphic novel,” “experimental,” and what those terms really entail. Special interest is paid to how it is not only text and image—the fundamental tools of comics—that can be harmonized, but space and time itself, in a manner that makes comics a prime medium to express immaterial and personal experiences with the unknown.

Taylor Swift's Discography as Poetry: The 10 Week Version (2024)

Student Facilitator: Mishal Imaan Syed | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Mott

This seminar is a survey of Taylor Swift's later discography, including the Folklore and Evermore albums, the All Too Well short film, and the Eras Tour film. We will be learning to conceptualize music as a literary artifact and applying principles of literary analysis to the songs in Taylor's Folklore and Evermore albums, since these sister albums are her first dedicated foray into non-autobiographical storytelling. We will also study her usage of visual design and visual storytelling in her Eras Tour performances of these songs. In our discussion of the All Too Well short film, we will combine our knowledge of literary and visual elements to analyze Taylor's growth and development as a singer, songwriter, and director.

Outspoken and Out West: Mary MacLane's Literary Frontier (2025)

Student Facilitator: Faith Forrest | Faculty Mentor: Helen Deutsch

This seminar explores the works of Mary MacLane, an early 20th-century American author, through the lens of gender, sexuality, and regionalism. Focusing on her autobiographical work *I Await the Devil's Coming*, we will investigate how MacLane navigated her time's cultural and social dynamics, specifically femininity, sexuality, and self-representation. The course also examines American regionalism, feminist diarism, and the intersections of queerness and place, using MacLane's writings as a central text to engage with broader literary and historical themes. By the end of the course, students will be able to examine how MacLane's works reflect and challenge the cultural, social, and geographical contexts of early 20th-century America, with particular attention to themes of regionalism, gender, and identity. Students will also be able to critically engage in comparative analysis of MacLane's diary-style entries and other American diaristic narratives, critically engaging with themes of sexuality, self-expression, and the constraints of early 20th-century publishing.

English Composition

Experimental Writing Workshop (2023)

Student Facilitator: Cory Chen | Faculty Mentor: Amber West

What if you wrote using braille? What if you created a story with fragrance, or wrote a poem in 6 languages or in a made-up language? What if puppets performed a poem? What if your poem is a tour through a mansion where you pass by words inscribed on random objects? What if your story had 21 characters or no characters? What if the setting was a cardboard box, or spanned across all 7 continents? This 1-unit course is a brief, but expansive exploration into different forms of experimental writing, including Avant Garde techniques from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era. As an English Composition course, we will learn by doing: employing experimental techniques in our own writing including linguistic and syntactic deviation, collage and other organizational deviation, temporal contortionism, genre hybridity, and multimodal writing. We will confront questions like: what is language? How can we bend language, sounds, syllables, syntax, and structure in purposeful ways? Students will understand and take influence from how authors, poets, and experimentalists like E.E Cummings, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Gadsby, Charles Yu, and others utilize innovative methods to reinvent our notions of writing and meaning. Students will engage in supportive peer-review workshops to write their own experimental poems, short stories, novel chapters, and other pieces that defy the categories that we have created in literature. At the end of 10 weeks, students will have a portfolio of 5 original, experimental works and have gained an opportunity to make unique literary and community connections along the way.

Environment

Environmental Nonprofits: Opportunity in a Changing World (2010)

Student Facilitator: Isis Krause | Faculty Mentor: Carl Maida

This class seeks to begin the learning process of how nonprofits function and the role they play in society. Nonprofits with an environmental focus are a particular subset of nonprofits and will be the focus of this class. Whether considering local water pollution, citywide environmental justice or national climate change policy, nonprofits play a large role in shaping the future of our environment. By gaining a deeper understanding of the history, managerial/leadership practices, key concerns, and future direction of nonprofits, specifically through the lens of environmental nonprofits, students will have the background knowledge to help them seek future jobs in the environmental nonprofit field.



Wet and Wild World of Water: How Water in Los Angeles Circulates Through the Human Experience (2016)

Student Facilitator: Denita Toneva | Faculty Mentor: Cully Nordby

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.

Environmental Stewardship through Sustainable Actions (2018)

Student Facilitator: Mark Biedlingmaier | Faculty Mentor: Carl Maida

With the recent U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the onus of the individual to create a more sustainable future has now become more important than ever before. Each class we will explore the issues and solutions related to that week's topic and how your daily actions can have significant local, regional, and global impacts. Throughout the seminar, students will learn how they can reduce their negative impact in these aspects of the environment through behavioral assessments, DIY projects, collaborative activities, discussions, and more.

Epidemiology

You Only Live Once—How Public Health Maximizes Life Expectancy (2015)

Student Facilitator: Maria Nataly Diaz | Faculty Mentor: Paul Hsu

Overview of the top public health accomplishments in the 20th century that led to a 27.62-year increase in life expectancy in the United States. It is based on an interdisciplinary approach that will use a combination of discussions, lectures, movie clips, and interactive activities to engage students in the material and establish a collaborative learning environment. Students will focus on public health achievements ranging from decreases in incidence of infectious diseases, heart disease, stroke, and tobacco use to increases in food and water safety, nutrition, and exercise.

Ethnomusicology

The Future of the Music Industry (2009)

Student Facilitator: Nick Wilson | Faculty Mentor: Anthony Seeger

The music industry is going through a period of great change. Record sales are falling, piracy is rampant, and labels are struggling to break new bands with radio and MTV in decline. Traditional assumptions about the music industry are being challenged daily and insiders and observers alike are unsure of where the music industry is heading. This seminar will discuss the current state of the music industry and the obstacles facing labels and bands. Students will engage critically about new business models that have been proposed to either complement or replace the traditional label system that has defined the music industry.

Music of Protest and Struggle in the Post-Colonial World (2011)

Student Facilitator: Andrew Harkness-Newton | Faculty Mentor: Anthony Seeger

This course will serve as an introduction to a chronologically and geographically diverse array of music movements that sought to confront conditions of poverty, corruption, rampant inequality, racism, tribalism, loss of cultural identity, violations to basic human rights, economic imperialism and neoliberalism. We will analyze the content of the songs themselves as well as the lives of the musicians that created them. Many of the artists covered in this course suffered censorship, imprisonment, torture, and even assassination at the hands of the state to get their message across. Though not all of them were able to see the change they envisioned in society, they all managed to capture the imagination of the public and keep hope alive during the most grievous of times.

Love, Drugs, Politics, and History: The Mexican Corrido (2011)

Student Facilitator: Marcos Ruedas | Faculty Mentor: Anthony Seeger

This class will examine the Mexican corrido, or traditional ballad, as an oral and musical tradition from Mexico and the American Southwest. As a song form that is often written by the community, the corrido offers unique first-hand accounts of significant historical events and provides insight into the social and political conditions of the time period from which it was written. The bicentennial celebration of Mexican Independence this year marks an important time in history to reflect on the rich cultural history that is kept in this song form and assess how current music trends document our own history. This class will examine how the corrido documents Mexican and Mexican-American history from the perspective of the people. The corrido will be examined from its early beginnings just before the Mexican Revolution through its most popular contemporary form as the narcocorridos that document the current drug cartel phenomenon. Students will gain an understanding of music as a medium of preservation for social, economic, and political circumstances and sentiments in history.

Fusion Music: The Effects of Colonization, Nationalism, and Globalization (2019)

Student Facilitator: Huirong Laura Jane Yee | Faculty Mentor: Helen Rees

Musicians and composers take inspiration for their music and compositions from their surroundings, and with increased globalization and cultural contact, explorations into new musical languages have led to the creation of genres now labelled “fusion” or “world” music. These typically refer to fusions of traditional (non-Western) and popular (Western) music; however, musical borrowing has been occurring since long before the term “fusion” was coined. This course will explore how ubiquitous the practice of musical borrowing is and has always been through several case studies of both historical and contemporary music fusion. Key points will address how colonialism, nationalism, and globalization – amongst other phenomena – have permeated local expressions of identity through music. Listening exercises will equip students with an expanded musical vocabulary to describe what they can hear in the music, as well as discuss the reasons for and origins of what they can hear.

The Artistry of J. Cole (2020)

Student Facilitator: Jason Frost | Faculty Mentor: Cheryl Keyes

Jermaine Lamar Cole, known professionally as J. Cole, is an American rapper, singer, songwriter and record producer. This course seeks to analyze J. Cole’s personal background, creative process in writing and producing, and messaging to determine the extent to which his artistry is unique from his contemporaries. Discussion will be focused on J. Cole’s upbringing and artistic influences, forms of expression, meaning and emotional impact of music, and other aspects of his discography. By the end of the course, students will have a better understanding of the intellectual complexities and nuances of J. Cole’s music and hip hop in general.

Transcending K-Pop Beyond The Surface (2021)

Student Facilitator: Helen Ng | Faculty Mentor: Katherine In-Young Lee

The Korean popular (K-pop) music group BTS is currently one of the strongest forces to be reckoned with in the music industry. Students will examine BTS’s musicianship and performative styles to understand the group’s evolution of incorporating musical elements from different cultures into their works, and what improvements can be made to promote more respectful, cross-culturally sensitive music in BTS’s artistry and the K-Pop industry on the whole. Students will also learn to use concepts from multiple disciplines to explore how BTS’s exposure in Western media can encourage more minority representation in typically unconventional fields, such as the arts. Along with learning about BTS, students will analyze how the group and its fandom ARMY collectively create a space for fans to reflect upon certain aspects of their own identities through music and art. In this seminar, students will actively participate in discussions.



Aid to Africa: Effects from the Outside (2007)

Student Facilitator: Dana Huber | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

Are George Clooney and Bono saving the world? Do the sale of flip phones and t-shirts actually help people? Is monetary aid to Africa effective? Are any changes being made? This course will examine the economic situation in Africa, specifically from the perspective of those contributing to the development on the continent. We will trace Africa's economic journey to understand how its present situation came to be. Students will apply this background to examine the effects of economic and humanitarian aid from outside influences, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, China, the United States, and NGOs. Through case studies, academic readings, and film, students will be able to understand the allocation of aid to Africa, and make the determination of what has brought about change.

European Languages & Transcultural Studies

The Questions Concerning Video Game (2025)

Student Facilitator: Ziyang Xie | Faculty Mentor: David Kim

Video games shape meaning and modulate affect. We watch them. We read them. And above all, we play them. Drawing on European critical theory and philosophy—from Huizinga to Heidegger—this seminar examines video games as a space for transcultural dialogue and critical inquiry.

Through a series of radical questions, we will strip away what is considered essential to gaming. Can we play with only text, as in early computer interfaces? Can simulated military training become dance? Can walking itself become resistance? Week by week, we will move through different modes of play—textual, embodied, automated, silent—to uncover how digital media generates new possibilities for being and relating across cultural boundaries.

Moving from early text adventures to contemporary experiments, we will develop a critical vocabulary that bridges European theoretical traditions with emerging forms of digital play. We will explore how games transform conventional systems of storytelling and performance, enabling new forms of identity and embodiment that transcend cultural and linguistic borders. Through collective gameplay and discussion, we will build frameworks for thinking with and through video games, ultimately asking not just what games are, but what they make possible. Like any good game, this seminar rewards curiosity and experimentation. All materials and discussion will be in English. No prior gaming experience required—just bring your willingness to play, think, and question.

Film and Television

Mad about Mad Men: A Multi-Perspective Critical Analysis of the Acclaimed Series (2013)

Student Facilitator: Nicole Malek | Faculty Mentor: Jonathan Kuntz

Do you love bow ties and perfectly coiffed hair? Do you like thinking about the role of the male gaze, the rise of duplicitous advertising, and the cycle of sex and alcohol addiction that is Don Draper? Though the common perception of Mad Men is that it is just about sexism in the sixties, it is about all of these things and so much more. This course gives students the opportunity to explore the show through a variety of critical perspectives including the traditional (historical, sexual, psychological) and also the untraditional (production value, analysis of the contemporary TV landscape). Each week we will employ basic strategies of the analysis of film and TV to tackle a different critical perspective, using each as an equal lens to analyze the auteur's intent and the medium's capacity for social criticism.

Sinking Your Blade into Anime—Introduction to Japanese Animation (2015)

Student Facilitator: Kevin Nguyen | Faculty Mentor: Charles Sheetz

Like a samurai's katana slashing its enemy, the pirate kings and giant robots of Japanese Animation have left their mark on the Western pop culture scene, emerging from a niche market in Japan to a globalized phenomenon. Exploration of Japanese Animation, or "anime," as a uniquely stylized medium of entertainment, cultural movement, and gold mine for thematic analysis. Introduction to anime for interested newcomers, but also opportunity for deeper interaction among existing fans. Viewings consist of the entire Fate/Zero (2011) series and samples from other representative works.

History Keepin' It Real: The History of the Hip Hop Generation (2015)

Student Facilitator: Rafael Silva | Faculty Mentor: Mary Corey

Designed for both majors and non-majors. Exploration of Hip Hop's meteoric rise as an American cultural phenomenon, with special consideration of landmark artists, songs, and genres. Historical survey of late twentieth century America will ground the story of Hip Hop in contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural circumstances.

Teen TV (2020)

Student Facilitator: Alexandra Kukoff | Faculty Mentor: Becky Smith

An examination of how teen shows have evolved and what kind of social impact they have on the world at large. Students will watch and discuss clips from Euphoria, Gossip Girl, Skins, the OC, Awkward., My Mad Fat Diary, Elite, and Riverdale among others.

Gender Studies

Playing God: American Transgender Healthcare Experiences from 1950 to Present (2017)

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

Exploration of often tumultuous relationships between transgender Americans and their healthcare providers over the past sixty years. Nuanced understanding of transgender medical experience, from gender clinics that proliferated at universities nationwide (including UCLA) to current discussions about medical autonomy and insurance coverage. Recent research into experiences transgender Angelenos are having with their healthcare providers to see how far we've come--and how far we have yet to go.

Geography

Refugee Studies: A Multimedia Exploration of the World's Refugees (2008)

Student Facilitator: Jamie Zimmerman | Faculty Mentor: Jared Diamond

The smartphone can be our friend and our enemy, for it is both a blessing and a curse. We will study reasons for why this is, looking at negative communicative effects such as anxiety, cognitive deficit, decreased attention span, mobile dependency, and addiction, just to name a few. On the flip-side, we will look at positive effects such as increased communication, quicker information access, stronger connections to the outside world, new communication styles, multifunctionality, and others. Ultimately, we will discuss the history of the smartphone and its impact on individuals and society. Students will leave this class knowing more about the frenemy in their pocket.

Anthony Bourdain vs. Rachel Ray: Modern Cultural Geography of Food (2009)

Student Facilitator: Pallavi Reddy | Faculty Mentor: Michael Shin

Food has a complex history but an even more complex future. With food trends, diets, blogs, trade, environmental changes, the future of food is something unknown. Each class topic can be applied to decisions that each individual makes. With shows like "Top Chef" and "Iron Chef" exposing many to new ingredients and preparations, the face of food known to most people in the world is changing. Now celeb-chefs like Anthony Bourdain travel the world, exposing viewers to different cultures and food systems ranging from the Bushmen of the Kalahari to the street food carts of Vancouver.

Hippies and Tree Huggers: The U.S. Environmental Movement in the 1960s and 70s (2011)

Student Facilitator: Hayley Moller | Faculty Mentor: David Rigby

Together, we will delve into this alluring world to explore the U.S. environmental movement of the 1960s and 70s in the context of the sustainability movement today. By analyzing the development and important historical moments of the movement, this course will address the linkages to and departures from “hippie” methodology in environmental approaches today. The course will emphasize the methodologies of both personal action and policy development, and in doing so will provide students with effective tools with which to approach environmental issues throughout their lifetimes. In sum, we hope to determine if, in fact, the hippies had it “all right.”

Evaluating Cosmopolitanism (2020)

Student Facilitator: Samantha Wieske | Faculty Mentor: Eric Sheppard

Cosmopolitanism is a political philosophy: the notion that every human is a part of a single community with a shared morality. As the international community has become increasingly globalized, cosmopolitan rhetoric has often been employed as a means to reduce inequalities and maintain peace. In his 1971 song, ‘Imagine,’ John Lennon implored the world to “Imagine there’s no countries... Imagine all the people sharing all the world” — what if we did just that?

Taken to its furthest extent, cosmopolitanism would entail the elimination of national boundaries and complete global governance; however implausible that reality may seem, cosmopolitan ideologies inform modern international policies and underpin globalization. Cosmopolitan ideals are seen in real world applications through treaties like the Declaration of Human Rights, and organizations like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. Throughout this quarter, students will be examining the topic cosmopolitanism, through various academic lenses.

Drones! Topics on Applications of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (2025)

Student Facilitator: Jiajun Ma | Faculty Mentor: Kyle Cavanaugh

Let’s talk about drones! Formally named Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), drones represent a transformative technology with applications across industries. As a drone pilot myself, I designed this course to provide you with a clear and practical introduction to drone technology. Through hands-on learning and real-world examples, this seminar will equip you with the knowledge to understand, operate, and apply drones effectively. And yes, you will be able to fly a drone during this class.

GCC Migrant Labor Abuses: Bound by Kafala (2025)

Student Facilitator: Leena Musharbash | Faculty Mentor: Kelly Kay

The dynamics of migrant labor exploitation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations of the Middle East have long been structured by the 'Kafala system,' a legal system that ties migrant workers to their employers and exacerbates vulnerability within the region. The rights of migrant workers are often overlooked or actively suppressed under this system, as the legal doctrines simply do not prioritize the rights of the migrant workers. Thus, the stories of migrant workers are frequently told from the perspective of those in power, leaving their voices marginalized and their struggles unexamined. Through a multidisciplinary lens, we will analyze the experience of migrant workers in the private and domestic sectors within GCC nations, examining how labor policies, practices, and protections influence these differences. Additionally, we will investigate the crossover between human trafficking and labor exploitation in law, shedding light on the unique legal vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers and the sociopolitical structures that exacerbate their challenges within international law.

Global Health

Access to Medicines (2021)

Student Facilitator: Ambika Verma | Faculty Mentor: Maryam Farzanegan

In this seminar, we will be examining the complexity and intersectionality of the access to medicines movement. This course will serve as an introduction to healthcare disparities around the world and the social, economic and political forces that create them. The course begins by discussing social determinants of health and how the global medicines accessibility crisis fits into the larger topic of public health. We will also highlight specific examples such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the COVID-19 global pandemic and discuss how access to medicines shaped these events. Then, we will discuss the current R&D model and how it is geared towards creating profitable drugs, often at the expense of patients' lives. The final section examines the healthcare system as a whole in the U.S. and European countries and we will end by discussing the power and impact of youth activism in the access to medicines space. For the final project, students will present a possible solution to tackle a specific systemic issue we have discussed in class.

Global Studies

Political Economy of the American Empire (2021)

Student Facilitator: Katia Arami | Faculty Mentor: Shaina Potts

This class will focus on a political, economic, and sociological study of the history of the United States as an empire. Through a political lens, we will study the policies that the United States used to subjugate key groups such as African Americans, Native Peoples, and migrants. From an economic perspective, we will explore how history enabled the economic rise of America alongside domestic and global inequality. Finally, in a sociological approach, we will pay close attention to how this history has shaped the social fabric of America and created tensions and deep national wounds yet to be addressed. The course of study will extend from the original colonization of North America to the modern day legacy of mass incarceration and exploitation of migrant workers.

Health Services

Game of Life: The Social Determinants of Health (2011)

Student Facilitator: Roman Roque | Faculty Mentor: Alice Kuo

This seminar explores the social underpinnings of health, with particular emphasis on race as a negative factor for discrimination and a positive factor for resiliency. We will examine historical and contemporary measures of health, and the importance of the healthcare workforce, reform, and public policy in promoting optimum health for all.

History

Cultural History of Oakland (2007)

Student Facilitator: Joseph De Wolk | Faculty Mentor: Mary Corey

Oakland's early history of Gold Rush and squatter culture, to the shipbuilding yards of World War II that brought an influx of Black migrants, to the city and its contemporary cultural phenomenon and iconography, from Angela Davis' afro to the whistle tip. This course uses Oakland as a case study of broader national and statewide cultural histories, urban development and urban issues, race relations, minority and countercultures, popular sports, and music history. The course will also address modern issues plaguing a host of our nation's great cities today, including urban crime and community-police relations, racial tension, public education, and gentrification.

They're coming for you: Horror & Science Fiction Films during the Cold War (2008)

Student Facilitator: Julian Carmona | Faculty Mentor: Jan Reiff

Films often reflect historical criticisms of the times in which they were released. This is especially the case for horror and science fiction films that came out during the Cold War. Writers and directors, whether subtly or obviously, tried to reflect the nuclear paranoid, unhinged, wartime, suburban nature of the Cold War Culture. This seminar will analyze the impact of horror films in their historical context. It will also stress that film interpretation, especially for horror and science fiction films, is ambiguous. Students will be challenged to create their own interpretations based on viewing films, readings and class discussion.

Religions in Contact: Contemporary Topics in Religious Dialogue (2009)

Student Facilitator: Catherine Nguyen | Faculty Mentor: Scott Bartchy

This course is an interdisciplinary seminar covering key topics in interreligious dialogue. In this seminar, we will address the issue of religions in contact with one another as well as religions in relation to other areas of life. The goal of the course is for students to integrate these various topics into a more comprehensive understanding of how religions come into contact with the modern world.

Hail to the Southland: The History of UCLA (2009)

Student Facilitator: Rene Tiongquico, Jr. | Faculty Mentor: La'Tonya Rease-Miles

This course looks at the cultural history of UCLA and the campus' contributions to 20th century US history. Students will engage with a variety of sources to put the experiences of past persons with the historical context of the time. We will go through a series of cultural events in thematic order (and to a certain extent, in chronological order) and will investigate a local history through the standpoints of students, faculty, staff of UCLA, as well the Los Angeles, California, national, and global communities.

Rituals, Resistance, and Rebellion: Religious Conversions in Colonial Latin America (2012)

Student Facilitator: Erik Pena | Faculty Mentor: Teofilo Ruiz

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce students to the non-traditional views of conversion practices in Colonial Latin America and the recent scholarship. The traditional views of conversion are monks preaching directly to the targeted population. Students will explore the different methods the Catholic Church employed to convert the Indigenous, African, and Jewish population into Christianity and measure the effectiveness. The main methods that will be covered in the course are the Requerimiento, the Spanish Inquisition in Latin America, the Auto de Fé



A History of Mystery: Minority Magicians, their Portrayal, Struggle, and Success (2013)

Student Facilitator: Angela Sanchez | Faculty Mentor: Eric Avila

When most audiences hear MAGIC the first image conjured is a man in coattails who is usually white. This seminar on magic history will focus on American magicians who are normally not acknowledged or whose histories have been overlooked by laymen audiences, such as women and ethnic minorities. The course will review magicians from the years of 1840 to the present day, featuring magicians across cultures and time. Seminar will include guest speakers, documentary features, and magic shows.

"To Pimp a Butterfly": Cultural Evolution of Black Los Angeles (2016)

Student Facilitator: Rakeidra Davis-Hudson | Faculty Mentor: Mary Corey

This course divulges a critical examination of community issues socially, culturally, economically, and politically, through artistic liberation: HipHop. 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 the dichotomy of black culture in America.

Chocolate: A Cultural Commodity (2016)

Student Facilitator: Madeleine Gregory | Faculty Mentor: Robin Derby

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.

Mexican Civilization Art and the History it Reflects (2018)

Student Facilitator: Korina Pilkington | Faculty Mentor: Teofilo Ruiz

This course focuses on various pieces of Mexican art and evaluates the historical contexts of its creation throughout certain eras. In this course, students have the opportunity to study art and connect such pieces to social, political, and economic influences of Mexican culture. Mexican art has had great influence on the world today as it is reciprocally enhanced by the perspectives of those who created it. In Mexican Civilization Art students develop a greater appreciation of art and Mexican culture.

History of the Domestic Cat (2018)

Student Facilitator: Ani Alaberkyan | Faculty Mentor: Muriel McClendon

From being worshiped as gods to hunted as demons to ruling the Internet, the human relationship with domestic cats has existed for millennia. This seminar builds a framework of understanding the interaction of humans with domestic cats throughout different periods in history. Almost every human civilization in history developed a relationship with their feline pets; this course explores how different cultures defined their relationships with domestic cats. Each week the class will draw connections between the significances of cats in a particular time period as well as political, social, and economic influences surrounding that era.

Putin's Russia (2018)

Student Facilitator: Joshua Mejia | Faculty Mentor: Jared McBride

In recent years, Russia has been increasingly involved in contentious behavior. From military action near abroad, to its potential involvement in the US elections, the country is no stranger to the world's attention. Russia's actions – good and bad – have global impact, and its key player is the country's president, Vladimir Putin. In order to reach a fuller understanding of recent events, this course explores Russia's cultural and social history. Students complete the course with a larger, and more complex, Russian story. We not only understand the history of one man, but rather the larger story of "Putin's Russia."

The History of the Modern Romance Novel (2020)

Student Facilitator: Lawrence Myung | Faculty Mentor: Debora Silverman

This course will discuss the history of the modern romance novel. Everything from Jane Austen to Fanfiction will be subject to study in this course. It is a history, which will not require students to read entire novels. Instead, we will use romance novels to understand broader historical trends like changes in gender roles. We will first examine the rise of the romance novel from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. From this, we will see the inclusion of other marginalized groups (based on class, sexuality, and race) in the romance novel genre through the late twentieth century, analyzing its shortcomings and future. Finally, we will take a closer look at modern romance novels, which will culminate in collaborative group projects that aim to derive further insight from the romance novel genre. For a long time, the romance genre has been dismissed by academics and society alike, which we aim to explore and rectify.

Wuthering Heights: Layered Narratives of Revenge, Passion, and Suffering (2021)

Student Facilitator: Madison Elder | Faculty Mentor: Teofilo Ruiz

This course examines, within a detailed historical context, the romanticist masterpiece of Wuthering Heights. The class will explore themes of love, passion, masculinity, femininity, revenge, suffering, death, and the supernatural, as well as what each of these suggest about the structure of English society. A study of the five main characters, Catherine, Heathcliff, Edgar Linton, Nelly Dean, and young Catherine will also be conducted as a means of surveying English standards regarding class and gender. In addition, emphasis will be placed on Brontë's unique writing style, romanticist, gothic, and Victorian influences, and the story's point of view from an unreliable narrator.

Honors Collegium

Past, Present, and Future of Standardized Testing in UC Admissions (2021)

Student Facilitator: Michelle Fausto | Faculty Mentor: Michael Suarez

In the wake of the "Varsity Blues" 2019 college admissions scandal and the COVID-19 pandemic, universities across the country have been increasingly changing the way they consider standardized testing in the admissions review process. Exploration of the issues of equity and access in the use of SAT and ACT college entrance exams. Discussion of the history behind college entrance exams and a review of critical literature about the racial and socioeconomic disparities of standardized tests both at the K-12 and collegiate levels. Application of analysis to University of California's comprehensive review process for admissions and five-year plan to eliminate standardized testing.

Mindhunter: Profiling and Serial Killers (2021)

Student Facilitator: Ana Verghese | Faculty Mentor: Michael Suarez

As crimes have devolved from basic motives such as love and money into sexual gratification and sadism, how do you catch a killer whose actions are the accumulation of personal fantasies? Lying in the realm between law enforcement and psychology, profiling, a complex art used to narrow down a suspect pool, became the answer law enforcement was looking for. This seminar will examine how interviews with serial killers such as Ed Kemper were turned into a tool that has allowed law enforcement to track down some of the most notorious killers. Beginning in the basement of the FBI, profiling began as a way to describe the characteristics of a suspect. Now, profiling has expanded to instruct officials on how to interact with the media, interrogation tactics, and has given society vocabulary such as “serial killer” itself.

Profiling, however, is not comparable to an algorithm on a computer; it is an innately human process. Each killer exhibits important differences despite similarities in upbringings and their crimes. This is why profiling has many critics because even though it is based on scientific research, profiling also relies on one’s opinion. So how do people become serial killers? Are children born evil? What are the different types of serial killers? Is profiling really a “science” or “black magic”? These are all questions that this seminar aims to review in depth.

Avatar: The Last Airbender--Connections to Real Life (2022)

Student Facilitator: Joey Lu | Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Jung-Kim

When the American animated television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (ATLA) was brought back to Netflix mid May 2020 last year in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, no one could have anticipated how popular it would be again— particularly among Asian American young adults. Fifteen years after the first episode of this fantasy children’s cartoon was launched, children, young adults, and not-so-young adults partook in watching or rewatching this animated series. Why may this be and how do themes presented in ATLA reflect current and historic, real-life issues? The first half of the course will focus on understanding ATLA and its connection to important historical phenomena, touching upon the Cambodian Genocide, the Vietnam War, and extractive colonialism primarily in East and Southeast Asia. Through discussion of the relationship between the four elemental nations in the show, the course will discuss how the show reflects larger themes of colonialism, militarism, and international power dynamics globally. The remainder of the course aims to analyze student’s own perceptions and connections to ATLA in current times. By reading articles on cultural studies and listening to podcasts discussing the popular cultural phenomenon that is ATLA, this course will seek to make connections from ATLA to real-life events, experiences and future discuss cultural representation in the media. Through discussion, this course also seeks to understand why ATLA is so popular and nostalgic to many in the Asian American community, especially during the time of Covid-19.

Psychology Behind Imposter Syndrome: Managing through Mindfulness (2022)

Student Facilitator: Somya Panchal | Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Lindholm

This course will involve an in-depth discussion on imposter syndrome, the psychological reasons for its prevalence in college students, and an extensive examination of its potential effects on our daily lives. Integration of strategies and self-care techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, self-reflections, podcasts, and much more, will help facilitate the lecture content. We will also gain professional insight from knowledgeable guest speakers and thorough discussions. The overall goal is to adopt a safe space, increase confidence, and enhance our capacity for self-reflection through curiosity and discussion. Two overarching questions that will help guide our work together throughout the seminar are: How can imposter syndrome affect our lives? What mindfulness tools and techniques can we use to mitigate imposter thoughts?

DNA Nanotechnology: from Fundamentals to Applications (2022)

Student Facilitator: Passa Pucghai | Faculty Mentor: Elisa Franco

Nucleic Acid nanotechnology is an exciting field, allowing engineers and scientists to utilize chemistry derived from nature (that of RNA and DNA) to build intricate and useful devices and nanostructures. This course hopes to impart an overview of the field: starting from foundational principles in biochemistry and molecular biology to self-assembly and design of nanostructures to applications in molecular computing to ethical considerations, and to contemporary and relevant related technologies.

Human Complex Systems

From Sand Piles to Students, Chaos to Emergence, Simplicity to Complexity (2008)

Student Facilitator: Jacqueline de Borja | Faculty Mentor: Dario Nardi

Have you ever thought that natural phenomena, such as ant colonies, jagged coastlines, or the assembly of people, are not just created at random? Do you wonder about what happens when $2 + 2$ doesn't equal 4, when events don't settle down into a stable equilibrium? Hopefully, you answered "I sure do!", because this is the seminar for you! We will explore the main themes of Complexity Science, and apply this new science to our own lives + surrounding world.

The Power of One: How Individuals Become Systemic Changemakers (2008)

Student Facilitator: Evan Shulman | Faculty Mentor: Dario Nardi

Ever thought about changing the world? This seminar will equip you with some tools from Human Complex Systems to help you do just that. Read interesting readings, watch thought-provoking videos, and discuss how to best change the world- all in an engaging and enjoyable 50 minutes a week.

Artificial Intelligence: Here, Now, and All Around Us (2010)

Student Facilitator: Amy Huang | Faculty Mentor: Dario Nardi

The seminar will begin by examining how our perceptions of intelligence have shifted over the last century, how it has traditionally been implemented in machines, and how it might be newly represented today. Then, we will explore instances of intelligence in a variety of locations not typically associated with the science-fiction robots of the future. We will see where algorithms originating in AI have produced solutions, or raised questions, in other, seemingly disparate fields. After examining our current reality, we'll look ahead to future and alternate realities, to the end of judging exactly where we stand among them. Finally, we'll question whether the Internet, as a collection of millions of individual minds, might ever begin to "think" in human fashion.

Complexity: What If? (2011)

Student Facilitator: Jovo Vijanderan | Faculty Mentor: Dario Nardi

Complexity Science is a fast emerging field combining multiple academic disciplines. In an age where change is inevitable and ubiquitous, this course seeks to answer the question "How can we model change and use it to our benefit?" This course will utilize tools found throughout modeling in the complex systems and apply them to scenarios found in multiple facets of our everyday lives. Students will also explore the field of complex systems through many different real-world applications such as Biology, Artificial Intelligence, and policy making. The practical aim of this seminar is to encourage Students to stop and explore the thought "What

Information Studies

Digital Narratives: How to Counter the Mainstream Narrative Online (2016)

Student Facilitator: Hannah Diaz | Faculty Mentor: Safiya Noble

This 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.

Institute of the Environment and Sustainability

Collaborative Cooking: Recipes for Social Justice (2020)

Student Facilitator: Sienna Rohrer | Faculty Mentor: James Bassett

What becomes possible in the world when we cook and eat together? What power does a cookbook have in making the world a more just place? This hands-on, experiential course explores the role of collaborative cooking and meal sharing in building social connection and activism. The course begins with an exploration of individual identities and an appreciation for the land that sustains us through food. Students choose a recipe in the beginning weeks of the quarter that has particular meaning to them, and we cook, reflect on, analyze, critique, and celebrate this recipe in discussions and reflections throughout the quarter. The sharing and cooking of these recipes is complimented and complicated by class discussions centered on: fostering social connection, resistance, and activism through cooking. The course culminates in a collaborative recipe book that imagines cooking and art as forms of activism and storytelling, composed of the recipes students have shared and cooked together throughout the quarter.

International Development Studies

Nio Far: Working Together Towards a Sustainable Future (2011)

Student Facilitator: Antoinette Brou & Anne Flaberty | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

Development is not just black and white, with a simple right or wrong answer; rather, development is a field known for its shades of grey. In this course, we will explore various perspectives and attitudes towards international development, specifically the field's past failures and successes and their current path towards progress. From the personal accounts of the mayor of an African Commune to the analytical viewpoint of a UCLA professor, this seminar will present a holistic view of development and teach students to think critically about current development trends.

Labor Studies

A Faster Fashion: The True Cost (2023)

Student Facilitator: Abeeha Hussain | Faculty Mentor: Caroline Luce

A Faster Fashion: The True Cost is a class that takes an in-depth look at garment production under a new age of Fast Fashion and its rapid growth around the world. The course and its materials are applicable to anyone who wears clothing. Students will gain an understanding of the racial, ethnic, cultural, climate, and legislative impacts that fast fashion has had around the world through a series of class discussions, readings, and case studies of real-life events. Students will also be engaged with speakers from unions, the garment industry, and legislative aides working on labor policy to get a real-life grasp on the work being actively done to push back fast fashion from accelerating. In contrast to the way fast fashion is centered on just unethical practice, this course uses intersectionality as a framework for identifying garment workers—the majority of whom are women, people of color, immigrants, refugees, etc—at the vanguard of the labor movement in the United States and around the world. It highlights their past and contemporary struggles, the fights from the beginnings of worker/labor education to modern day climate crisis awareness and social welfare advocacy. Popular culture, consumerism and fast fashion trends impact the lived realities of workers in sweatshops, and racial and gendered expectations shaped public perceptions of garment workers. By doing so, the course reveals the true cost to fast fashion by carefully explaining the intersection at which fashion historically and continues to have a central focus on global trade, industrialization, gender, immigration, and unionization.

American Pastimes: Labor Organizing Efforts and Professional Baseball (2024)

Student Facilitator: Matthew Royer | Faculty Mentor: Caroline Luce

This seminar explores the principles of the Labor Studies discipline by examining the history of two American pastimes: baseball and labor organizing. Throughout the evolution of professional baseball, players have consistently sought to organize for various workplace rights, including fair wages, civil rights, and addressing legal challenges that followed. This seminar focuses on labor organizing in baseball, drawing on athletes' experiences, the history of organizing efforts within the sport, and the strategic steps organizers took to establish baseball as one of the most robustly unionized sports today. Key topics include baseball's role in middle-class culture, media consolidation, the monopolization of Major League Baseball, the sweatshop system, and the intersectionality observed in the integration of female and Black athletes. Through the lens of baseball, this course offers a unique perspective on teaching Labor Studies.

Life Science

Making the Grade – At What Cost? (2023)

Student Facilitator: Eva Danesh | Faculty Mentor: Shanna Shaked

This seminar will dissect the relationship between mental health and the current structure of the education system. Positive psychology, the characteristics that allow humans to flourish, and behavioral change, how to live by those lessons in real life, will be the foundations of our journey of examining the things undergraduates often connect with life satisfaction — a high grade, a prestigious internship, or a top graduate school — and where the source of motivation lies. You will get a holistic understanding of our current education system, from the original intention of grades to how they differently motivate well-performing and struggling students, while also evaluating modern change. We will discuss experiences Bruins have had experimenting with new evaluation methods, including the introductory biology course adopting an A/F only grading system for one quarter and UCLA's medical school shifting to pass/fail grading. This course will also give you opportunities to reflect on your experiences both in school and in life and prepare you to share the skills and knowledge you gain with others.

One small step for mankind, one giant leap for medicine: An Introduction to Space Medicine (2025)

Student Facilitator: Santhosh Nandakumar | Faculty Mentor: Rana Khankhan

Ever wondered what happens to your body in space? This course dives into the fascinating field of space medicine, exploring the incredible intersection of human physiology and the cosmos. We'll uncover how the unique environment of space affects—from zero gravity to cosmic radiation—affects key bodily systems like balance, muscles, bones, fluids, and immunity. No prior knowledge of physiology is required—we'll cover everything you need to know in class. Join us as we explore cutting-edge research in space medicine and discuss the exciting future of space tourism, long-distance missions, and even the possibility of living on other planets!

Linguistics

Fusion Music: We Speak your Language: Collaborative Art as a Means of Community Inclusion (2019)

Student Facilitator: Danielle Potheau | Faculty Mentor: Mary Elizabeth Glavin

Analysis of the role language, art, and creativity plays in personal identity, community, society, and environment. Explore art as a vehicle for generating an inclusive and engaging community. Seminar allows students to discover personal creativity and talents, and culminates in the creation of a collaboratively constructed artwork to be installed on the UCLA campus. Networking, conflict resolution, community organization, dissolving language and cultural barriers. Examination of relationships between language, culture, art, self, and community.

Fusion Music: Shining Light on Invisible Disabilities (2019)

Student Facilitator: Nathan Mallipeddi | Faculty Mentor: Jesse Aron Harris

Individuals with invisible disabilities represent a large group of disabled persons who are often overlooked due to the secretive nature of their disability. Even though people with these types of disabilities suffer mental, physical, and social impairment, they are often forgotten in the services provided by government and society due to preconceived notions of disability rankings. This discussion based seminar will shine light on the concept of invisible disabilities and guide student discussion on the challenges and solutions in achieving disability parity. Students will also connect the topic of invisible disabilities to other powerful social movements in society, like gender, race, and sexual orientation.

Management

Mad Over Marketing: Why We Buy What We Buy (2017)

Student Facilitator: Shashvat Soman | Faculty Mentor: Dominique M. Hanssens

Study of world of marketing with a holistic approach, combining creative, strategic, and psychological elements of marketing. Examination of different marketing campaigns across a variety of brands and media channels such as TV, social media, print, out-of-home, Guerilla, etc.

Starting a Startup: Lessons from the Grapevine (2018)

Student Facilitator: Eric Pan | Faculty Mentor: Terry Kramer

Many students dream of becoming successful entrepreneurs, but where does one start? When looking back at these experiences, experienced entrepreneurs often enjoy sharing advice and lessons learned to fuel the next generation of doers. Pieces of advice like “follow your passion” and “learn by doing” are great, but what does that mean? This course looks deeper into what it actually means to start a company through case studies, storytelling, and informal advice sourced from personal experience as a student entrepreneur. We will explore some common themes of entrepreneurs, and students gain a foundational framework to start their own entrepreneurial journey.

Social Entrepreneurship: Innovations in Social Impact (2019)

Student Facilitator: Anna Nordstrom | Faculty Mentor: Paul S. Park

How can businesses, nonprofits, and governments come together to instigate social change? This class will utilize discussion and hands-on learning to dive into topics of social impact, specifically related to challenges on college campuses. Through guest speakers, interviews, and group discussion, students will learn about unique approaches to impact. Students will have the opportunity to consult on challenges at UCLA by researching the current landscape of the challenge, brainstorming solutions, and presenting in groups their proposed solutions.

Mathematics

Mathematics & Movies (2016)

Student Facilitator: Ruth Dolly Johnson | Faculty Mentor: Spencer Unger

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; the course only requires basic understanding of high school mathematics.

Math in Everyday Language: A Hands-On Exploration (2017)

Student Facilitators: 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? Exploration of fundamental concepts from mathematics in a tangible, interactive manner. Use of 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. Students with any level of familiarity with the field may gain new insight and develop intuitive understanding of mathematics. No previous knowledge of mathematics is required.

Medicine

AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Modern Plague (2011)

Student Facilitator: Garret Ma | Faculty Mentor: Thomas Coates

During this seminar, we will explore AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa and by the end of the seminar series you will have a greater understanding of the implications of AIDS on its society; not only on its people but its economy, politics and international level. We will examine how “globalization” has led to greater activism for AIDS humanitarian work from Western countries. More importantly, we will discover how Sub-Saharan Africa has and how it will overcome such a disease burden. This seminar will focus on the development of AIDS/HIV in the 1990s, the biochemistry around the virus and its current threat to the political and economic stability of this impoverished area of the world. More closely we will look beyond the individual concerns that AIDS brings but at the aggregate and how it afflicts the country as a whole. At the end of the class we will address the most fundamental question: “Why should we care?”

Dissecting the Big “It” – Perspectives on Human Sexuality (2012)

Student Facilitator: Nishad Sathe | Faculty Mentor: Thomas Coates

This seminar will look at sex from many perspectives. We will look at it historically, biologically, socially, and in general, analytically. We will analyze the underlying root of the cultural shame within this topic, followed by our discussion of its relevance in virtually every field.

The world's worst kept secret - Neglected Tropical Disease (2020)

Student Facilitator: Alexis Elliott | Faculty Mentor: Claire Panosian

This course will serve as an introduction to Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), a group of infections that particularly affect low-income countries and impose a major burden on human health and productivity, while at the same time attracting relatively scarce resources and attention from the global community. The material in this course is appropriate for students in ALL majors (not just STEM) and will not only cover factual information about the diseases, but also the psychologic and social consequences of them. Overall this class will allow students to think critically about the complexity of the problem NTDs pose and to analyze why they are ‘neglected’. Until the final two weeks of the course, each weekly session will focus on one particular NTD and one common theme among these infections; during the last two sessions, students will present their final (group-assigned) projects covering certain NTDs not previously discussed in class.

An Introduction to Medical Clinical Research (2023)

Student Facilitator: Daniel Bolotin | Faculty Mentor: Veena Ranganath

Welcome to “An Introduction to Medical Clinical Research”, a student-taught seminar course which will focus on providing students with a well-rounded understanding of the history, ethics, and methodology behind medical clinical trials. This one-hour weekly seminar requires no previous knowledge of research or statistics and will be aimed at anyone in the general undergraduate population with an interest in medical clinical research. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media and news websites were inundated with countless articles and posts covering the recent advancements and setbacks in the fight against the virus. Ultimately, clinical trials played a pivotal role in testing the medications, procedures, and vaccines that were developed against the coronavirus. Acknowledging the increasing relevance of clinical research in our modern society, students will be encouraged to relate the information learned throughout the course of the seminar to current world events and personal experience. By the end of the seminar, students will be able to think critically about clinical research presented in the media and be familiar with the resources available at UCLA and beyond.

An Apple A Day: Examining Nutritional Literacy Through the Lens of Fad Diets (2024)

Student Facilitator: Neha Gupta | Faculty Mentor: Paul Hsu

You've probably seen social media content creators make frequent claims about what is healthy and what is harmful—greens supplements should be taken each morning, and grass fed butter is the only acceptable fat to incorporate into one's diet! How can we investigate these claims on our own in order to make informed choices about what we eat and cultivate a healthy relationship with food? How can you, as a consumer, look beyond the promises of fad diets while still prioritizing health and fitness goals? The goal of this course is to employ a critical, evidence-based approach to exploring the world of diets, nutritional literacy, and our relationship with the food we eat. The course will take 3 into consideration the gray area surrounding this world of information—while there may be no answer to what a “perfect” diet is, we will all benefit from distinguishing between research and marketing and evaluating the information we absorb from various sources.

Taste-testing the world: A Bruin's Guide to Nutrition & Longevity (2025)

Student Facilitator: Agamroop Kaur | Faculty Mentor: Paul Hsu

In this 10-week seminar, students will embark on a flavorful journey through global cuisines and cultural traditions, unraveling the secrets of longevity found in the world's healthiest communities, the Blue Zones. By connecting nutritional science, cultural insights, and personal reflections, students will uncover how dietary choices influence not just physical health but social and mental well-being too.

With investigating UCLA's dining halls to hands-on activities like building personalized meal plans, this course offers an interactive and practical approach to nutrition. We'll explore critical topics, like the impact of socio-economic disparities, cultural inclusivity in dining spaces, and the challenges of navigating misinformation in America's food culture.

Together, we'll analyze how college campuses can better serve diverse student needs, and you'll leave equipped with the tools to advocate for healthier, more inclusive food systems—both on campus and beyond. Whether you're passionate about food, health, or sustainability, this seminar will inspire you to take small, impactful steps toward building a healthier future.

Microbiology, Immunology & Molecular Genetics

Diseases that Changed the World: How Diseases Affected the History of Civilization (2008)

Student Facilitator: Erika Villaruel | Faculty Mentor: Larry Simpson

This seminar will study epidemics that have impacted the world. Diseases affected civilization, not only in decimating the population, but also in changing the structure and foundation of society. Through the eyes of both a scientist and historian, this seminar will study epidemics that impacted the world, from bubonic plague and smallpox to malaria and AIDS.

Viruses: Harmful Agents with Medicinal Applications (2017)

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

Exploration of use of viruses as tools in medical research, including discussion of their adoption as therapeutic agents. Introduction to basic processes exhibited by selected viruses, to understand therapeutic potentials of viruses as delivery systems in gene therapy. Interaction with distinguished virologist, who is an active researcher and professor at UCLA.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: An Analysis (2018)

Student Facilitators: Cole Oost | Faculty Mentor: Oliver Fregoso

Science fiction and fantasy often explore remarkable beasts such as firebreathing dragons or shape-shifting werewolves, but how many of these fantastic abilities already exist in the animals with which we share our world? This class investigates a sample of eight different groups of fascinating characteristics and some of the peculiar animals that possess them, including ourselves. Through these analyses, the class hopes to impart the wider importance of protecting the incredible diversity of life on our planet.

Military Science

Simulating U.S. Crisis Decision-Making (2008)

Student Facilitator: Swati Srivastava | Faculty Mentor: Casey Miner

This seminar is designed to provide practical involvement with theories and histories of the years past to students interested in actively learning material through role-playing and discussion. You will cover major crises in U.S. diplomacy, instances where national security was put in jeopardy and a swift course of action was demanded from the American leadership. We will apply theories of decision-making during simulations of said crises to not only understand how diplomacy and leadership factor into crucial policy-making, but also how a few can alter the course of history for the many. Students will role-play as key U.S. leaders during international crises, emphasizing practical engagement with political theories and historical backgrounds.

Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology

Molecular Superheroes: How Plant Growth Promoting Bacteria can Save the World (2009)

Student Facilitator: Allison Schwartz | Faculty Mentor: Ann Hirsch

This course will focus on the methods by which plants and bacteria can work together to enhance agricultural plant growth, and how we can use this valuable natural partnership in various ways to create sustainable agricultural systems essential to the long-term solution of some of today's toughest food-stock, energy production and environmental issues. Students will explore the various methods by which soil bacteria can improve plant growth, enhance food's nutritional value, increase natural plant resistance to drought, disease and insect attack, clean existing pollutants from the soil and help to establish more arable farmland in poor-quality soils in an ecologically responsible manner.

Science and Society: Bridging the Gap (2010)

Student Facilitator: Rameen Moridzadeh | Faculty Mentor: Karen Lyons

Both the advances and shortcomings of science continually morph our society. As such, it is imperative for aspiring public policy advisors, government officials, and other non-science students to understand how science directly impacts our futures. Entrenched in these debates, however, are strong misconceptions about scientific topics such as evolution, genetics, and regenerative medicine. The purpose of this course is not only to identify these misconceptions, but more importantly to provide a deeper understanding of the scientific culture and its bearing on seemingly unrelated fields. Through a combination of debate, guest lecturers, and presentations, students will delve into topics and questions at the forefront of science. For instance, should insurance agencies and potential employers screen applicants using genetic profiling, and what is the validity of such profiling? Is immortality attainable in our lifetime?

Dissection of Cancer: The Uniqueness of this Disease and its Impact on Human Condition (2012)

Student Facilitator: Aswin Srinivasan | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

About a third of humans develop cancer in their lifetime. Cancer replaced cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of deaths in the US in 2005. This course covers current concepts and knowledge of this unique disease, including research and treatment. First, we'll be exploring the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying cancer development with the aim of understanding how changes in the normal growth and division processes lead to the formation of tumors. We'll also be exploring various aspects of cancer with interesting real life analogies. Second, we'll explore topics such as the natural history of the disease, oncogenes, tumor suppressors, cancer-causing viruses, epidemiology, clinical trials and current therapeutic approaches to the treatment. Third, we'll also explore the treatment, healing and how patients deal with cancer. Besides the current drugs and potential of future drugs, early diagnosis plays a huge role in cure for cancer. Students will be made aware of how treatments are effective if diagnosed early and the methods of early diagnosis of cancer. This course isn't a regular science course that's offered in UCLA and there are no pre-requisites.

Above the Genome: Epigenetics and Uncovering the Secret of Life (2014)

Student Facilitator: Joshua Weinreb | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

Through this course, science and non-science majors alike will come to a better understanding of “The Secret of Life” and how it applies to our current lives and the future. Together, we will learn genetics and epigenetics and analyze the associated technologies. We will explore the past and present controversies within these fields, and even extend our discussion to issues that may come up in the future. You will learn why human males are genetically more similar to male chimps compared to human females (that explains a lot!), watch movies portraying the controversial issues we are discussing, and ultimately find out what the “Secret of Life” even is!

Music

From Fingerpickers to Metalheads: How Guitar Took Over World (2017)

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

How guitar has become the most popular instrument in the world, with focus on examining characteristics of selected popular guitar styles. What makes guitar appealing and versatile, similarities between styles, and how to distinguish them. Development of guitar within styles such as flamenco, reggae, rock, blues, and heavy metal. Consideration of how, economic, and political role guitar plays in style's culture. Guitar construction. Role of gender in guitar playing, including important contributions by women guitarists. Live demonstrations. No previous guitar or musical experience is required.

Music History

Understanding Franz Liszt, the First Rock Star (2016)

Student Facilitator: Beniko Hirosawa-Bates | Faculty Mentor: Raymond Knapp

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 studying the culture of the Romantic era and comparing it to current experiences, students will be brought closer to the subject matter.



There Will Be Light: Musicals and Disabilities (2016)

Student Facilitator: Richard Tucker | Faculty Mentor: Raymond Knapp

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.

Modern Conversations in Hip-Hop: Important Motifs and Relevant Cities (2017)

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

Opinions and sounds of hip-hop can arguably serve as a metaphorical pulse-check of the current state of America. Structured discussion of some pertinent conversations in hip-hop in order to define the current zeitgeist of hip-hop in America, and what it implies for trends in future generations of music.

Creating Music in a Mobile Environment (2018)

Student Facilitator: Jake Richardson | Faculty Mentor: Gigi Johnson

This course is focused on creating music with mobile devices (e.g. iPhones and Androids) through a collaborative learning environment, featuring lectures, demonstrations, student presentations and group projects. This course provides students the knowledge of how to work digital audio workstations (DAW) on their mobile devices, and the tools to write music and explore sound through a more personalized and detailed process.

Musicology

Zinesters Unite! Living Literacy Legacy (2018)

Student Facilitator: Nina Crosby | Faculty Mentor: Jessica Schwartz

The radical riffs of punk transcend the world of music, history, and culture, and even subvert the traditional rules of English literature. Punk zines surfaced adjacent to the antagonistic nature of punk music, beginning in the 1970s, and have become increasingly privileged as socially relevant media. This class examines the sociocultural and academic aesthetics of perzines and fanzines as both performative and archival material and analyzes the temporalities of zines through lenses of gender, race, sexuality, politics, and accessibility to discover why and how zines contribute to larger cultural dialogues.

Wot Do You Call It? : The Evolution of Grime Music (2019)

Student Facilitator: Bethanie Sonola | Faculty Mentor: Robert Fink

Designed for non-majors. Examination of the grime genre within the social, cultural and political context of the UK from early 2000s to present. Emphasis on using musical output as lens into issues such as postcolonialism, racialized poverty and government accountability. Use of scholarly readings, news articles, musical examples and documentaries that connect students to relatable case studies.

Psychomusicology: How Music and the Brain Create Our Experienced Reality (2020)

Student Facilitator: Laine Gruver | Faculty Mentor: Elizabeth Upton

This course aims to shift the way we often think about music, moving from perceiving music as something that exists within the boundaries of our reality to something that pushes and redefines those boundaries. We will explore the ways in which music augments human reality through neuroscientific, psychological, and aesthetic lenses. Course subject matter is interdisciplinary and includes the intersections of music with neuroanatomical vision and audition, neurological disease, psychology, animation, film, and nature. We will analyze media ranging from modern indie songs, to classic Disney animations, to renowned film scores. In addition to artistic media, we will discuss scientific writings about music and the brain to examine how the junction of art and science creates a unique learning space with clinical implications. Students will walk away from the class with a new holistic appreciation for how the music they have always listened to has in fact subconsciously shaped their lives.

International Sounds of the Sixties and Seventies (2023)

Student Facilitator: Mallika Singh | Faculty Mentor: Robert Fink

This course aims to combat the sanitization of international artists from the late 60s and well into the 70s, hoping to humanize them in ways that study playlists and party mixes cannot. Various international takes on American genres, such as disco and rock will be examined: from analyzing the American military's influence in Southeast Asia and how this led to Cambodian psychedelic rock, to studying the sociopolitical factors that encouraged Italian jazz to compose the score to the rise and fall of the adult film industry in America. This course is for those with a passion for music, history, and an intersection of the two that takes us back to some of the most tumultuous, and some of the most sonically transcendental time periods this world has seen.

Neurobiology

Brain Fever: Bridging the Gap Between Neuroscience and Psychology (2007)

Student Facilitator: Anthony Eskander | Faculty Mentor: Arnold Scheibel

Students will be introduced to the fundamentals of the human brain, from embryology to the various disorders that might be inflicted upon this wonderful and complex structure. This course will “bridge the gap” between the two major schools of thought of how to approach the study of the brain. Rather than trying to cover many aspects of the brain, we will focus on a few structures and concepts. This course will be particularly valuable to those who are deciding whether they want to be a Neuroscience, Psychobiology, or Psychology major.

Brain Basics: From Alzheimer’s to Zoloft (2009)

Student Facilitator: Shadi Lalezari | Faculty Mentor: Arnold Scheibel

This seminar is an introduction to the broad and exciting field of Neuroscience. Students will begin the course with an overview of fundamental topics such as anatomy and electrophysiology. They will then move on to more specific topics such as the neurotransmitters, psychological disorders, disease, and drugs and alcohol.

The Psychology of Arts and Crafts (2009)

Student Facilitator: Maxie Gluckman | Faculty Mentor: Scott Johnson

This seminar will promote a greater understanding of the educational psychological development of preschool and grade school children through the mode of arts and crafts. Each week will delve into a different psychological phenomenon, linking a specific arts and crafts project to said phenomenon and back to the overall theme of a person coming to know themselves and the world around them.

Happiness (2009)

Student Facilitator: Emily van Sonnenberg | Faculty Mentor: Benjamin Karney

Students will explore research and theories in the field of Positive Psychology, as well as the application of empirical methods shown to increase happiness both for the individual and society. “Happiness” will encourage proactive thinking, discussions with other students, and employ applicable interventions for the student to expand upon.

Neuroscience

This Is Your Brain on Music (2016)

Student Facilitator: Tyler Toueg | Faculty Mentor: Ellen Carpenter

Music has existed since the beginning of recorded history and plays a critical role in 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.

Frontiers in Neuroscience: Exploration of Science Fiction and Fact (2021)

Student Facilitator: Laila Khorasani | Faculty Mentor: Neil Harris

Seminar, one hour. Cross-examination of neuroscience as a rapidly advancing and innovative field, along with its portrayal in speculative and science fiction. Approach to critical analysis of the strengths and limitations of scientific methodology and reasoning. Analysis of neuroscientific and psychological themes commonly depicted in fiction, such as artificial intelligence and consciousness. Discussion of science fiction through a variety of mediums, spanning from text to the silver screen. Comparison of the state of modern neurotechnology with that seen in science fiction.

Biological Superpowers: Examining Human Outliers and Enhancements (2023)

Student Facilitator: Abigail Holder | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

Have you ever wanted to have superpowers? From rare genetic mutations to sudden prodigies, this seminar delves into the extraordinary realms of human biology, with the purpose of exploring the extremes of the human body and mind, analyzing current popular areas of research and bioethics, and examining potential applications of remarkable anomalies in our population to future society. This course will look at real case studies of innate, acquired, and engineered abilities in a way such that students will leave with a better understanding of modern issues and debates in biology, the impressive capacities of human physiology, and of themselves.

Looking at the Kaleidoscope of Healthcare (2025)

Student Facilitator: Eesha Chakraborty | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

This course will focus on specific themes, such as language in healthcare settings, business and health marketing, technology and law in healthcare, global health, and intercultural communication. Each week will feature a variety of activities from guest speakers to interactive case study scenarios, as well as associated assignments to promote further reflection on topics. The seminar culminates in a healthcare debate tournament, where you will engage in lively discussions on controversial topics, a health hackathon where you will collaborate to propose innovative solutions to real-world healthcare challenges, and a fun healthcare-themed escape room where you solve riddles and puzzles based on the course content. In the final weeks, you will showcase your learning through a final project presentation in pairs or groups of three, allowing you to represent your newfound knowledge and skills in creative ways.

Neurology

Varying perspectives on disease: from molecules to populations (2018)

Student Facilitators: Eliza Fazzari, Leane Nasrallah | Faculty Mentor: Leif Havton

This interdisciplinary course provides a comprehensive study of one disease from a multitude of perspectives. Undergraduate students are rarely exposed to the wide breadth of approaches from which we may analyze the effects of a particular disease. Focusing on one field, such as molecular biology, prompts appreciation for that facet of the condition but excludes the others. In order to realize the most favorable course of dealing with an illness, we should have an understanding of more of the factors involved. In class, we study one disease from a variety of lenses by using Huntington's disease, delving into neurobiology, ethics, doctor experience, patient experience, and public health implications. By realizing that human disease is not contained to one field but that it spreads across multiple, we provide a greater appreciation for the factors that must be considered when viewing a particular illness.

Pediatrics

The Heart of Understanding: Empowered to Make a Difference (2008)

Student Facilitator: Julianne Abdout | Faculty Mentor: Juan Alejos

This course will serve as an interactive way of learning about the heart and cardiovascular disease- the #1 killer in the United States. Students will have the opportunity to think like doctors, health advocates, and individuals affected by cardiovascular disease in order to become empowered to spread awareness of the disease in their communities.

Philosophy

Paradoxes and Philosophical Riddles (2013)

Student Facilitator: Seul Kee Baek | Faculty Mentor: Katrina Elliott

In daily life we believe in a host of things that we simply take as common sense. The sun will rise tomorrow; I think, but a piece of wood does not; two is more than one. But what if we could show that it is impossible for all of these beliefs to be true—as impossible as circular triangles? Paradoxes create situations in which we are forced to give up some of our most cherished beliefs, often leading to vigorous disagreements regarding which beliefs are acceptable to reject. In this class, students are invited to interpret various types of paradoxes, formulate their own solutions, and defend it against others in a spontaneous debate. Topics covered include existence of the objective world, validity of scientific knowledge, space and time, infinities, self-contradictory statements, and the meaning of consciousness. All topics are discussed in nontechnical language and no prior knowledge of formal techniques is required.

Thinking on Your Feet: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sport (2016)

Student Facilitator: Benjamin Genta | Faculty Mentor: Calvin Normore

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.

The Philosophy and Neuroscience of Free Will (2016)

Student Facilitator: Eden Sayed | Faculty Mentor: Calvin Normore

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.

Terrorism, State, and Justification (2017)

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

The subject of terrorism is highly prevalent in contemporary American discourse. Politicians and news pundits discuss acts of terrorism, its origins, and its consequences. However, it is rare to ask what terrorism is. How does terrorism differ from warfare? How does terrorism differ from homicide? Use of philosophical and historical material on terrorism to attempt to answer these two questions.

What is the Meaning of Life?: Interdisciplinary Popular Approaches (2018)

Student Facilitator: Helen Lee | Faculty Mentor: Andrew Hsu

The meaning of life has inspired some of the greatest literature and pop culture cartoons, divided schools of thought such as atheism and religious spiritualism, and fueled countless existential crises in every human life. Why does thinking about this matter in the present-day? Prominent figures have dared to tackle life's biggest questions, such as Aristotle on the human function, Rick from "Rick and Morty" on nihilism, Kanye West on living materialistically, and the Dalai Lama on simplicity and kindness. Students will use philosophical, theological, and social inquiry to derive and develop their own answer to the meaning of life and learn how to make philosophy applicable to their daily life.

Patriarchy and Prisons (2019)

Student Facilitator: Hannah Hsieh | Faculty Mentor: Alexander Jacob Julius

Introduction of the phenomenon of mass incarceration in contemporary American discourse. Interrogation of mass incarceration in relation to class, race, gender, and sexuality; essential role of patriarchal structures and institutions in the development of the traditional legal system and the practice of incarceration; what various disciplinary lenses and epistemologies (history, legal theory, philosophy, political theory, etc.) reveal about mass incarceration. Key thinkers and ideas from across humanities and social sciences are highlighted.

The Ethical Considerations of the Use of Slang/Swear Words (2019)

Student Facilitator: Pallavi Adapa | Faculty Mentor: Andrew Hsu

This course will offer an overview of ethics and philosophy of language in order to allow students to grapple with the difference between formal and informal language (slang), and the social implications of the use of one over the other. There will also be discussion regarding the use of swear words, and the ethics of such use.

Philosophy of Modern Information: Community and Isolation (2019)

Student Facilitator: Joshua Khorsandi | Faculty Mentor: Andrew Hsu

Preparation: None, but having taken a philosophy course is always helpful. Modern readings of subjects concerning: Escapism, Epistemology, and Morality. Exploration into our relation towards information and technology within both offline and online communities. Considerations of how our immense increase in access to information impacts our daily lives. Questions concerning the way information interacts with social media, e.g. how have new forms of expertise affected our understanding of social media? Lecture and discussion-based class time.

The Mechanical Mind and Mindlike Machinery: An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness (2019)

Student Facilitator: Zoe Lee / Jone Bacinskaite | Faculty Mentor: Sam Cumming

In this course, we will be analyzing and evaluating the actuality of artificial intelligence technology from a holistic overview of philosophical and cognitive theories as well as neurobiological and technical bases. Specifically, we will be investigating what it means to be conscious or intelligent and examining the structural and functional similarities and differences between the human mind and artificial intelligence. We will then critically and effectively analyze, evaluate, and philosophize about various past, current, and future AI technologies. This will include discussions of the ethical issues and societal impacts to consider in the use of intelligent machines, the representation of artificial intelligence in media and art, and the potential for artificial intelligence to achieve conscious behavior. Through an interdisciplinary approach, we will build a comprehensive and integrated understanding of philosophy, neuroscience, and computer science to fully grasp the nature and state of the human mind and mind-like machinery.

Physics

The Physics of Superheroes and Science Fiction (2012)

Student Facilitator: Sundipta Rao | Faculty Mentor: Robijn Bruinsma

This is a class designed just for students without a previous background in physics. We'll be learning basic topics in physics while analyzing examples from comic books and science fiction. And don't worry; you won't be needing much math, just a background in algebra!

Controversies in College Athletics: Race, Politics, Gender, and Beyond (2012)

Student Facilitator: Princeton Ly | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

College athletics is a multi-billion dollar venture that involves hundreds of institutions and thousands of athletes, coaches, and support staff, not to mention millions of loyal fans. Major events, from basketball's March Madness to football's Bowl Championship Series, have become part of America's cultural psyche. But most student-athletes participate in nonrevenue sports and seek careers that reward them for something other than their physical prowess. This seminar will explore UCLA's athletic history as a starting point to examine various cultural, economic, and sociopolitical issues in college sports past, present, and future.

From Mind to Matter – The Quantum Quandaries (2014)

Student Facilitator: Krish Bhutwala | Faculty Mentor: Eric Hudson

In high school, we all learned about protons and electrons and how they combine to give the building blocks of matter, life, and basically everything we see. But have we ever stopped to consider how they came up with these radical ideas about things they couldn't even observe? The solution became what we call Quantum Mechanics, and it is the study of reality on its most, well, elementary level! Quantum mechanics is known as this bizarre, other-worldly science wherein it's possible (yet incredibly unlikely) that my clone will appear next to me in the next second or we would be able to walk through walls (neither of those happened). What is possible, what is unlikely, and what is outright impossible? These are some of the questions we wish to answer through quantum mechanics. This class jumps into quantum mechanics from its very inception at the turn of the century. Using our own intuition and reasoning skills, we aim to follow the history and development of science throughout the 20th century, and debate why experimental and theoretical physicists concluded what they concluded. Why did we need new science? Who were the major figures developing this science? With texts and media sources entertaining for science and non-science majors alike, we will explore the underlying thoughts that go into building a science like quantum mechanics.

God Does Not Play Dice: Why Einstein Hated Quantum Mechanics (2019)

Student Facilitator: Bozco Vareskic | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Regan

A study of the fundamental scientific principles of quantum mechanics: wave particle duality, wavefunctions, and the uncertainty principle; An investigation of the philosophical aspects of the theory that made it controversial even among the world's best physicists: determinism, entanglement, locality, many worlds, and free will.

Lifelong Kindergarten: Reimagining STEM Higher Education Pedagogy (2019)

Student Facilitator: Alejandra Cervantes | Faculty Mentor: Shanna Shaked

Analysis of teaching methods and their efficacy in achieving student learning outcomes and retention in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) higher education. Guided STEM lesson plan design, with focus on UCLA STEM as the case.

Physiological Science

Time is Brain: A Complete Look into the Epidemic of Strokes from the Patient to the Lab (2013)

Student Facilitator: Anadjeet Khabera | Faculty Mentor: Patricia Phelps

Stroke is a disease of lifestyle, meaning anyone is susceptible regardless of family background. This seminar aims to educate students on the topic of cerebral strokes. How do strokes occur? How do we recognize them? What treatments are available for stroke? With recent advances in stroke therapy, there have been more survivors than ever before. However, these survivors tend to live with disabilities due to the stroke. With stroke incidence higher than it has ever been, this has led to stroke being the leading cause of adult disability within the United States. Current stroke research is investigating how to erase these disabilities by repairing the dead brain tissue lost during the stroke event. This requires a great deal of time, effort, and money. First, new neurons must be born at the site of stroke. Second, these neurons must survive. And third, the original connections of lost neurons must be reformed. These challenging tasks lie ahead of stroke researchers. Handouts, primary research articles, newspaper articles, and lectures will be provided to help advance each student's understanding of stroke.

Emergency Code Stroke: Stroke Education in Los Angeles (2015)

Student Facilitator: Elias Saba | Faculty Mentor: Patricia Phelps

As students living in Los Angeles, it is incredibly important to understand the steps we can take to smooth the health disparities found in our communities and take an active role in improving the lives of those who live around us. In this course, we dissect the public health landscape of Los Angeles by focusing on strokes and the way socioeconomic, genetic, and cultural differences play a role in both the risk of stroke, the access to stroke prevention and awareness initiatives, as well as medical response and recovery afterwards. Beyond basic stroke morphology, students can expect to learn about local stroke awareness initiatives, the evolving status of emergency response in Los Angeles, factors resulting in increased disease risk, local health policy, and the role UCLA will play in addressing the health disparities the city of Los Angeles faces.

Musicophilia: Your Brain in Today's World of Music (2019)

Student Facilitator: Abraham Sumpad Chorbajian | Faculty Mentor: Alan Grinnell

Whether we listen to music to relax, exercise, or study or while playing an instrument, we all have had experiences with music at some capacity, be it a social, personal, or professional level. Investigation of the science behind the relationship between the brain and music and how this relationship affects the way we feel or act when listening to music. Examination of the science behind how the brain interprets and responds to music in music composition, music therapy, and the music industry through discussion and experts in these fields coming in to guest speak. Reflection of how this relationship affects the way students (among others) perceive music in today's music scene, which includes music on the radio and film. Analysis of the genres of hip-hop, jazz, pop, and classical in context with how our brains process these genres. Application for music as a therapeutic tool in treating neurodegenerative diseases when drugs fall short.

Physiology In Media: The Bodies of Zombies (2024)

Student Facilitator: Jayleen Cruz | Faculty Mentor: Anthony Friscia

This course aims to ignite new interest in physiology, inspiring scientific exploration beyond boundaries of convention. Using an interdisciplinary approach to physiology, this course offers students a brief introduction to basic physiology while also delving into topics of epidemiology, basic biology, history, and sociology. Our journey will include referencing clinical research studies, analyzing various diseases, and utilizing the intriguing lens of zombies to enhance comprehension of course concepts.

Political Science

Never Again, Again: Looking at the Rwanda and Darfur Genocide (2007)

Student Facilitator: Karina Garcia | Faculty Mentor: Edmond Keller

After the Holocaust, the international community clamored that “Never Again” would we let such a horrifying event occur without taking action. Then came Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and now we are in the midst of another failed “Never Again” in Sudan. This seminar focuses specifically on the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and its current effects, and the ongoing genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan. We will learn and discuss the politics of genocide, the international community’s role, aftermath and reconciliation, and the current state of both situations.

Play Ball! A Look at Baseball and Its Political Meanings (2008)

Student Facilitator: Anthony Stier | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

Baseball has become an American staple and constant for people and families across the country. The game and corporation, however, have many political interactions. This seminar will analyze these interactions, as well as study how current Major League Baseball came to be. We’ll talk about controversial issues, look at the sport’s importance, examine its social ramifications, and have a good time doing so.

Videogaming World War II: Experiencing Power Politics and Theory of Tripolarity (2010)

Student Facilitator: Einar Engvig | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

Short reading introducing lecture and discussions of in-game experiences and corresponding readings, followed by active simulation. Discussions revolve around relating new gaming experiences and knowledge, as well as aspects of game itself to theory of tripolarity, political realism in general, and any related aspects therein. Students engage in problem-based simulation learning by playing Hearts of Iron 2 (HOI2) as specific great power nation-states from 1936 to 1948, where understanding of geopolitics of the era are not only relevant for winning, but essential. The game is designed to follow general historical lineage that can be altered depending on strategies students simultaneously study and use.

Private Parts: Privatization, the Public Sector and You (2010)

Student Facilitator: Justin Lam | Faculty Mentor: Brian Walker

Through the lenses of political theory, public policy and management, you will receive a national and international perspective on the private and public sectors. This outlook, rarely provided in undergraduate courses, will help situate your understanding in a 21st century and global context. This seminar will begin with a review of the motivations guiding the private and public sectors, and a historical survey of the factors that have resulted in the privatization of certain public goods today. Through case studies, this course will expose you to several ways in which decisions about whether they receive public goods from private or public entities can affect them. These studies will take place in mostly American but also comparative government contexts, with relevant examples brought in from other countries. Finally, you will be challenged to think about these relationships in the context of your role as a citizen and about how you might be able to influence those around you with this knowledge.

Madison vs. Modernity: Is the Constitution Relevant to Democracy in 2012? (2012)

Student Facilitator: Nirali Beri | Faculty Mentor: Scott James

This seminar interrogates the American Constitution—both its institutions and values—in light of modern democratic (i.e., majoritarian) aspirations. In the year 2012, why aren't "We the People" simply allowed to rule? What are the justifications for placing limits on the ability of a simple majority to govern itself? Do we even need a Constitution? We will explore how democratic the Constitution is and debate, formally and informally, how democratic it ought to be. Students will investigate these questions over ten weeks, framing their arguments at the intersection of contemporary constitutional and policy questions, including immigration, healthcare and the environment. James Madison's Constitution versus Democracy—we know what won in 1787, but what should win today?

“Champions Made Here,” Athletically Driven, Politically Motivated (2013)

Student Facilitator: Mariah Williams | Faculty Mentor: Michael Lofchie

From the sports cynic to avid fan, notions of Collegiate Athletics and the “Student-Athlete,” range from vivid dissent to complete admiration. This seminar aims to analyze the common understanding of, and misconceptions associated with, the “Student-Athlete.” By exploring facets of Big Business industry, the Darwinian Struggle, and gender norms, as they relate to the lives and experience of college athletes, students will be equipped with baseline knowledge; then given the opportunity to engage in debate, voice personal opinion, and express their innermost convictions.

A Day in Court – The Precedents, Practices, and Procedures of U.S. Criminal Trial Attorneys (2014)

Student Facilitator: Timothy Hooyenga | Faculty Mentor: Karen Orren

Once in your lifetime, you will be a part of the criminal justice system, either as a member of a jury, maybe as a witness, or unfortunately as a victim of a crime. Ever wondered what goes into the trial process? Ever wanted to know how attorneys prepare for their cases, present their arguments, and propel their side of the facts into the minds of jury members? Combining a step-by-step evaluation of the various components of a courtroom trial with a rudimentary understanding of basic legal issues, this seminar intends to appeal to both those who have serious thoughts about law school and legal processes and to those who simply want to better understand their favorite legal-based drama. This course will address the fundamental building blocks that attorneys rely upon to construct and conduct their arguments in court. With different topics designated for each session, students will learn some basic techniques and “tricks of the trade” that attorneys employ in trial. As the title suggests, the seminar addresses three areas of legal principles that attorneys must consider before and during their trials. The first weeks concentrate on the pre-trial issues that can affect the entirety of a trial. We will be primarily focusing on Supreme Court precedents that address such issues as police investigations, the right to an attorney, and jury selection. The second portion of the seminar will dive into the trial process itself, examining the practices of attorneys and the methods through which they develop their arguments. These methods will include theme and case development involving the calling of witnesses, delivery techniques, and direct and cross examination formulation. Lastly, the seminar concludes with a discussion of the common legal procedures that attorneys use to manipulate the trial process and counter their adversaries’ arguments, including the introduction of evidence and the use of objections.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals— Multinational Cooperation, Human Rights, and International Order (2015)

Student Facilitator: Jasleen Bains | Faculty Mentor: Deborah Larson

We will observe how states in the 21st century have cooperated with one another to combat disease, terrorism, and economic disaster. Students will gain an understanding of the role human rights play in vaguely defined principles, such as peacekeeping and security. This course examines negotiations from the UN Security Council to the UN Human Rights Council to understand international efforts in transnational issues. The course is divided into three themes: (1) security (2) development and assistance (3) human rights and international law. These frameworks will be used to evaluate the UN Development Millennium Goal of the week. This course is an introduction to contemporary human rights problems and the global response to these issues.

We, the Corporations (2017)

Student Facilitator: Austin Barraza | Faculty Mentor: Steven P. Bilakovics

Corporations today are able to exercise unmatched influence over government. Debate on corporate power over politics by examining how corporations influence government in order to produce policies that protect their economic interests. Comparisons drawn between different eras of American history to understand the relationship between big business and government. Overview of constitutional provisions and lobbying and possible approaches to reigning in corporate power.

Colonialism, International Law, and Standard of Civilization (2022)

Student Facilitator: Nihal Anees | Faculty Mentor: John Branstetter

This course will deal with the standard of civilization, a legal and discursive concept integral to historical and modern international law. It is the clearest manifestation of colonialism in international law, asserting a hierarchy amongst nations according to the ‘sophistication’ of their civilization and distributing rights and responsibilities on that basis. Over the course of 10 seminars, we will survey the historical development and use of the standard of civilization at two pivotal points in colonial history. The first half of the course will chiefly concern the era of extraterritoriality in the 19th century, where Europeans in non-European territories did not have to answer to local laws or policies. The second will deal with the League of Nations’ Mandate system, which granted the governance of many regions in Asia and Africa to the colonial elites that had emerged victorious from World War I and formed the body. During both parts, we will deal in detail with Japan and the Ottoman Empire. Readings and lectures will span topics in international law, political science, and history, and students will be encouraged to think critically about the similarities and differences between two ostensibly unrelated countries and their colonial histories.

Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

Creativity: Its Biological Basis and Therapeutic Applications (2012)

Student Facilitator: Kendra Knudsen | Faculty Mentor: Robert Bilder

This course aims to reveal the deep inventiveness of the mind and its essential role in improving and adding meaning to our lives. Creativity encompasses a complex set of discrete behavioral traits that involve generating, manipulating and extending ideas to produce something that is new and useful. By investigating molecular, cellular and cognitive mechanisms, we will discover the discrete dimensions of creativity. We will discuss a range of topics, including what bird songs, smart mice and addiction can reveal about creative thinking; the relationship between mirror neurons and dance; and the neural mechanisms underlying the chills we get from our favorite songs. Throughout the course, we will explore how therapists interface clinical neuropsychology with the mindbody approaches of creative art therapy to facilitate self-expression and self-discovery.

The Neuroscience of Music (2014)

Student Facilitator: Joan Chou | Faculty Mentor: Ellen Carpenter

Music is all around us, impacting many aspects of our lives. We consciously listen to music for the pleasure and emotions it evokes, and we are subconsciously influenced by the music we are exposed to in commercials, film soundtracks and our everyday environment. Yet the science of listening to music is poorly understood. Our brain perceives music, which elicits a wide range of emotions to varying degrees. But how? Why do we even need music, if it has no apparent evolutionary advantage? This seminar will shed some light on this mystery from the perspective of scientific research supported by empirical data. We begin by covering some fundamental neurobiology of the auditory system and sound perception. From there, we will explore several aspects of music, such as its emotional impact, its connection to speech and language, the famous “Mozart effect”, and current therapeutic uses for music. The best part of learning is being able to apply that knowledge to everyday life. The last two weeks will be “lab sessions” where we listen to music in various contexts and observe the effects studied throughout the quarter. Students will develop a genuine interest in music outside of this course and listen to music outside of the classroom with a well-informed scientific ear.



Biomedical Ethics of Advanced Clinical Technologies (2014)

Student Facilitator: Maxwell Roth | Faculty Mentor: Thomas Strouse

Biotechnology is ushering in an era of groundbreaking medical advancements in genetics, neuroscience, and molecular biology promising better treatments and new cures. But are these biomedical technologies being employed in ways that extend beyond the scope of their approved medical purpose? This course will examine this question by focusing on select biomedical technologies, and analyzing both their capacity to improve health and their potential to be misused. The assigned readings and course material will consist broadly of biomedical ethics texts, biotechnology journal submissions, popular science articles and internet-based social media content and public resources. Through class discussion on how these biomedical technologies are used in the assessment and treatment of patients in a clinical setting, this seminar will explore the intersection of biotechnology and ethics. Students will investigate the ethical boundaries of these biomedical technologies and evaluate a few of the current and theoretical models for technological and ethical oversight in healthcare. Lastly, students will engage each other, each week, in dynamic discussions on the role and application of biomedical ethics and advanced biotechnologies in the future of healthcare.

Mindful Movement—Growing Interest for Mindfulness Meditation (2015)

Student Facilitator: Kush Bhatt | Faculty Mentor: Marvin Belzer

This course will explore the practice of mindfulness meditation and the increasing importance of mindfulness in the western world. We will begin by discussing the origins of mindfulness in the East and the introduction of mindfulness in the West. We will then go on to examine promising contemporary research regarding mindfulness in medicine and psychology. In addition to this, we will also be looking at the application of mindfulness practice in various settings such as schools, hospitals, and businesses. Lastly, students will be encouraged to develop their own practice of mindfulness through exposure to mindfulness events on the UCLA campus.

The Empirical Lotus: Intersection of Buddhism and Science (2019)

Student Facilitator: Ray Vaca | Faculty Mentor: Marvin Belzer

Brief introduction to the recent dialogue that has taken place between Buddhism and science. Topics include Buddhist history and philosophy, meditation, neuroscience, physics, and cosmology. Emphasis on areas of convergence and divergence between the two traditions. Experience with Buddhism or science is not necessary.

Psychedelic Drugs: From Molecular Biology to Society (2020)

Student Facilitator: Iris Feng | Faculty Mentor: Christopher J. Evans

Exploration of various hallucinogens, including classical psychedelics such as LSD, Psilocybin, DMT/Ayahuasca, Mescaline/Peyote, 25i-NBOMe; dissociatives such as Ketamine, PCP, Salvia divinorum, DXM; other hallucinogens such as frog skin, Ibogaine, nitrous oxide, MDMA, Cannabis, 2C-B. Discussion of history and origins; mechanism in brain; metabolism; physiological, physical, and sensory effects; risks and tolerance; therapeutic, spiritual, and recreational use; sociocultural impact; laws and regulations; and student opinions on hallucinogens.

Music, Movement, and Medical Therapy: The Impacts of Music Therapy and Dance Therapy on Neurodevelopmental, Neurodegenerative, and Mental Health Conditions (2023)

Student Facilitator: Christopher Chae | Faculty Mentor: Rujuta Wilson

Beautiful melodies and passionate dances are two inspiring forms of art that captivate our hearts. But not many know that these two ways of expressing emotion do more than inspire. This seminar aims to explore the psychotherapies of Music and Dance therapies and its neurological and physiological effects on the mind and body. Students will be introduced to a new perspective on ways to view healthcare and engage in creative thinking to make the healthcare system more pertinent and catered to the patient experience. Experts in the field will be invited to share real world applications of Dance and Music therapy in treatment as well as in practice. The class will dive into current evidence-based results based on clinical research being done to further our knowledge in the field. Through critical examinations of neurodevelopmental disorders, neurodegenerative diseases, and mental health conditions, we will understand the effects of such therapy and its additive nature to build holistic treatment plans. This will be a discussion-based class serving to engage students in interdisciplinary thought through the lens of different neurosocial perspectives.

Introduction to Psychopharmacology - Drug Treatment for Mental Health Conditions (2024)

Student Facilitator: Drew Hirsch | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Evans

Students will explore the molecular mechanisms of action of various classes of psychotropic drugs, their clinical applications, and the social implications of their use. This course will provide students with a basic understanding of the field of psychopharmacology and the evidence-based pharmacological approaches to treatment for mental health conditions. How is it that molecules interact with receptors in the body to produce specific, therapeutic effects?

Throughout the course, students will learn about the clinical uses of antidepressants, anxiolytics, stimulants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers. In addition, it will provide a brief overview of novel drug classes and pharmacological targets being investigated in the treatment of mental health conditions, such as psychedelics. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how these drugs work at the molecular level and their interactions with different neurotransmitter systems in the brain and nervous system. Case studies will be used to illustrate the real-world, practical applications of these drugs in clinical settings.

Lastly, students will examine the societal implications of psychiatric drugs, with an emphasis on access to care and barriers to mental health treatment. This course is designed for beginners, and no prior knowledge of neuroscience or pharmacology is necessary.

The Genetics and Neuroscience of Autism (2024)

Student Facilitator: Jeffrey Yang | Faculty Mentor: Leanna Hernandez

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a heritable neurodevelopmental disorder that is characterized by deficits with social communication and the presence of restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. In the past 20 years, the number of ASD diagnoses have tripled in the United States with 1 in 36 children receiving an Autism Diagnosis.

In this seminar, we will explore recent developments in Genomics and Neuroscience that contribute to our understanding of ASD. We will evaluate scientific findings in these two respective fields and unpack how the current literature describes the biological processes underlying the social and behavioral symptoms that occur in ASD. To gain a holistic understanding of ASD, we will also learn about the reactions and perspectives of the neurodivergent community to new scientific findings and engage in dialogue about the ethics and purpose of scientific research.

Over the course of 10 weeks, we will learn about the landscape of ASD research and, more importantly, discuss the merits and flaws of current techniques and methodologies. In addition, we will develop individual questions concerning ASD by presenting on recent findings.

Neuromodulation and Psychiatric Disorders: History, Present Uses, and Future Directions (2025)

Student Facilitator: Andrew Bishay | Faculty Mentor: Alexander Bystritsky

What if the key to treating anxiety, depression, and addiction lay not in traditional therapies alone but in the untapped power of cutting-edge technology? This course explores the transformative field of neuromodulation and neurotechnology, focusing on their application to neuropsychiatric disorders. While mental health awareness has grown significantly in recent years, neuromodulation remains an underappreciated but rapidly advancing player in treatment. Once associated with crude and invasive methods like the infamous prefrontal lobotomy, neuromodulation has evolved into a precise, research-driven field offering hope for treating complex neuropsychiatric conditions. As this field continues to grow, it holds incredible promise for reshaping the landscape of psychiatric care, offering new hope to those affected by some of the most pressing mental health challenges of our time. This course will provide an introduction into these topics and is suitable for STEM and non-STEM majors alike. All class content and assignments have been constructed in a manner that no prior neuroscience knowledge is needed for your success or understanding, though it is more than welcome!!

Psychology

Psychology of Body Image (2007)

Student Facilitator: Lisa Connolly | Faculty Mentor: Traci Mann

It is nearly impossible for any undergraduate student attending UCLA, a campus located only a few miles west of Hollywood, in a city obsessed with image and built on celebrity worship, to not be aware of the importance, or seeming importance, of the 'perfect body'. Drawing from psychological studies, experimental findings, and written narratives, this course will explore the creation of norms in American society that place a high emphasis on appearance and body image, with attention paid to how these standards have evolved. We will examine how these norms are internalized in the individual. The degree to which body image contributes to personal construction of identity and self-concept, and how this varies dramatically between the sexes, and among different ethnicities and age groups.

The Mysterious Mind: Bridging the Gap between Mental Phenomena and Neuroscience (2008)

Student Facilitator: Sandhya Ravikumar | Faculty Mentor: Steve Lee

This seminar will investigate mental phenomena such as phantom limb pain, the placebo effect, and the control of unconscious processes. While not typically emphasized in psychology or neuroscience classes, these fascinating anomalies can potentially provide tremendous insight into the profound capacity of the mind and its relationship to the brain.

L.A. Schools: An Inside Look (2010)

Student Facilitator: Lauren Camarillo | Faculty Mentor: Jim Stigler

In this seminar, we will take an inside look into two middle school classrooms in Los Angeles and Compton Unified School Districts, analyzing lessons, student-teacher interaction, learning optimization, and the instructional dynamic of a classroom. Using our observational experiences from these two videotaped lessons, we will compare schools in the suburban-urban context, discussing factors of the academic achievement gap. Broadening the scope from Los Angeles schools to K-12 education in the United States, this seminar will address the socioeconomic and psychological implications of underachievement in our public education system. Is the so-called academic achievement gap truly an achievement gap? Or is it merely a gap in opportunity? Through discussion, we will discover which factors of a school's structure – both externally and internally – perpetuate the negative cycles in our history from which we are trying to progress.

The Psychology of Investing (2010)

Student Facilitator: Alexandra Davis | Faculty Mentor: Adriana Galvan

In this seminar, we will examine human rationality (or irrationality), and the psychology behind decision-making. The course will explore the shortcuts people use when presented with too many choices, and the biases that steer people towards one decision over another. We will compare the differences in the outcomes of options when they are presented in various ways, and consider the impact social factors may have on the decision-making process. Subsequently, we will discuss how these factors may apply to investment decision-making, additionally evaluating the roles of emotion and mood, as well as risk tolerance in investment choices. Then, we will attempt to discern whether or not economic theory is still applicable, given what we have learned. Finally, the course will conclude with a discussion of the real-world value of the concepts covered, and how this knowledge about decision-making can be used to make more fitting choices in the future.

The Psychology of Child Play (2010)

Student Facilitator: Nancy Young | Faculty Mentor: Scott Johnson

Child games are important activities that enhance many aspects of child development (e.g., social, physical, and mental developments) and promote intrinsic interests in learning. This seminar poses some important questions to keep in mind throughout the course. How do games reinforce gender stereotypes and gender division? Do children naturally gravitate toward certain games, and if so, why? How do children become socialized through their participation in the games? This seminar will cover different topics ranging from Jean Piaget's theory of children as active learners to motor development to sex differences. Students will come to understand how various games played in childhood strongly influence child development and affect the way children perceive themselves and the world.

The Costs of Gamifying Education (2013)

Student Facilitator: Peter McPartlan | Faculty Mentor: Jim Stigler

This seminar addresses the rise of gamification in education, as well as psychology's recent discoveries that have highlighted the need for school reform, exploring how gamification and psychology are both converging on educational practices at the same time. This seminar will introduce the various applications of gamification, look at how it has started to change education, and study psychological research on how educational environments affect children's psychological growth. We will do this by examining current examples of gamification, educational practices, academic literature, TED talks, and our own experiences. Discussion and hands-on work will receive equal attention throughout the course, as the topics covered will aid student teams as they work to prepare their final projects.

Fast Cars and Battle Scars: Understanding the Modern Combat Veteran and PTSD (2013)

Student Facilitator: Andrew Nicholls | Faculty Mentor: Christine Dunkel Schetter

This course is designed to give students who have never served in the military a sense of what challenges modern combat veterans face: what it is like returning home from combat with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other injuries [e.g., Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)], and the under recognized minority of female combat veterans. These will provoke a discussion of what should be done at different levels of society, ranging from how we can support friends who may have served, community level programs, and national or policy level initiatives. You will be presented with a different range of materials from different perspectives that you will be asked to analyze and discuss through a psychosocial framework as voters and potential future policy makers.

The Enigma of Subjective Experience (2015)

Student Facilitator: Cody Kommers | Faculty Mentor: Martin Monti

Designed for students of any major. Examination of current theories of consciousness from both philosophy and neuroscience. Survey big questions of consciousness: How does the objective world give rise to subjective experience? Is consciousness a fundamental element of our universe? Can computers become conscious? Focus on group discussion with interactive demonstrations and guest lectures. Culmination in a deeper ability to question personal beliefs about consciousness and to incorporate an explanation of consciousness into scientific worldview.

Mind Over Health Matter: The Social Psychology Behind Modern Health Controversies (2016)

Student Facilitator: Jasmine Jafari Faculty Mentor: Carlos Grijalva

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.

Mind Games: Psychology behind Controls (2016)

Student Facilitator: Becky Li | Faculty Mentor: Jesse Rissman

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.

The Big Happy Picture: Exploring Perspectives of Happiness (2016)

Student Facilitator: Luis Mendez | Faculty Mentor: Gerardo Ramirez

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?

Criminal Justice: History, Neuroscience, and Psychology behind Major Controversies (2017)

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 use of death penalty, to solitary confinement, to bail system. Deconstruction of these debates using historical, neuroscience, and psychological lens. Critical analysis of the cyclic criminal justice system, starting with arrest of individuals and ending with release.

Positive Psychology: Living a Happier Life (2019)

Student Facilitator: Joseph Nguyen | Faculty Mentor: Philip Sayegh

Analyze scientifically-verified strategies and psychological studies to show what we should truly strive for in order to live a happier life. Understand ways of increasing happiness by learning about the common misconceptions and psychological biases, review several psychological studies in several different aspects of our lives, and learn how to apply those studies to our daily lives. Students will also have the opportunity to explore different cultural and national perceptions of happiness and compare it with their own society’s views. The outcome of this course is to ultimately give you an awareness of the many factors surrounding our well-being that you can use to be a ‘happier’ and more successful student at UCLA.

College Students and Noncommitment: Is Hookup Culture Changing Modern Romance? (2020)

Student Facilitator: Gillian Borges | Faculty Mentor: Benjamin Karney

Examination of hookup culture and its effect on college campuses through use of psychological research.

Exploration of hookup culture development, participation, effect on different student groups, connection with sexual assault and rape culture, and if/how hookup culture has changed relationships for college students in the present and their futures.

Procrastination: Why We Do It and What to Do About (2021)

Student Facilitator: Joeun Shin | Faculty Mentor: Hal Hershfield

Exploration of topics regarding procrastination, from proposed causes to evidence-based strategies. Overview of how parenting, mental health, fear of failure, and stress influence the development of chronic procrastination.

Examines the role that self-regulation plays in the occurrence of task avoidance and covers techniques, such as selfcompassion, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioral therapy that increase goal-directed behavior. Students are encouraged to apply strategies from class and to engage in frequent self-reflection.

Hello, Can You Hear Me: Introduction to the Auditory System and How It Can Be Damaged (2024)

Student Facilitator: Christine King | Faculty Mentor: Avi Adhikari

If a tree falls in a forest and someone is around to hear it, how do they translate the traveling sound waves into something that their mind is able to detect, and what might hinder them from doing so? In this course, we seek to answer these questions by exploring the path of the auditory stimuli from its origin at the soundsource to its destination in the perceptual processing areas of the brain. We will start by investigating hearing as a sense, delving into the structures that contribute towards the sensation and processing of auditory stimuli.

We will discuss how anatomical structure relates to function within the auditory system, and how disruption to structure causes impaired function. Once a groundwork of the neuroscience of hearing has been established, we will discuss and hypothesize how damage of each portion of the system may impact one's experience of auditory stimuli. Following these discussions, we will explore existing research on factors that contribute to hearing loss. We will also look into how technology has the potential to both damage hearing through personal listening devices as well as improve sound perception following hearing loss through hearing aids or cochlear implants. We will demystify common tests that medical professionals perform during routine checkups and delve into the social implications of living with hearing loss in a world where many take hearing for granted. To conclude, we will hold a series of short student-led presentations covering current research topics in the field of hearing.

This seminar has been designed as an entry-level course on the human auditory system, suitable for students with no prior experience in related fields!

Cubing For The Mind: A Psychology Seminar (2025)

Student Facilitator: Ryan Bae | Faculty Mentor: Jesse Rissman

A classic puzzle with a deceptively simple premise, the Rubik's Cube has captivated and confounded people for half a century. But solving the world's best-selling puzzle has far more to offer than an intellectual challenge. This seminar explores various aspects of psychology using the Rubik's Cube as a foundational guide. Topics include learning, memory techniques, expertise, mental health, stress management, and happiness.

Public Affairs

Tax Policy Reform (2021)

Student Facilitator: Medha Maindwal | Faculty Mentor: Steve Zipperstein

"Why do we pay taxes? Are taxes constitutional? What makes the US tax system different from other countries? Should we tax the wealthy at a higher rate? Should everyone get equal access to tax planning services? Since the US economy engages in trade and aid with numerous countries, a change in the way the government generates or spends revenue could create positive/negative ripple effects in the rest of the world. This class examines if tax reform can help create effective social change and examines the way the current American taxation system operates. This 1-unit P/NP course is structured to include insightful discussions and student presentations. We will delve into concepts of constitutional law, economic theory, political science, and public policy to examine various case studies we may have come across in headlines. Even though this course may sound technical, it is designed for students from all academic backgrounds and years as an introductory course on how the American taxation system operates and if it can be improved!"

Public Health

Preventive Medicine: Leading Healthy Lifestyles for a Better Future (2014)

Student Facilitators: Rasika Deshpande, Sajan Shah | Faculty Mentor: William McCarthy

Regular milk or soy milk? 20 minute jog or a 20 minute nap? Every day we are forced to make important decisions about the foods we eat and the lifestyle that we live; but what exactly are the repercussions for our good and bad decisions? In this seminar we will explore good nutrition, exercise, and healthy life choices. Specifically, we will discuss obesity, tobacco, mental and physical health, and sex. Other aspects of preventive medicine that we will investigate are the implications of socio-economic and cultural barriers that affect the lifestyle choices that exist around the world. After this course, students will have learned and developed the tools necessary to be able to form a lifestyle plan that will help them pursue a healthier future.



Plant-Based Diet: Best Diet for Disease Prevention and Longevity (2018)

Student Facilitator: Raheem Louis | Faculty Mentor: William McCarthy

The United States is currently experiencing an increase in chronic conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, fatty liver disease, and asthma. This seminar will investigate, with the aid of primary literature sources, why an adoption of a whole-foods, plant-based diet could prevent and even reverse these major conditions. Scientific evidence suggests that a plant-based eating pattern may be just as effective as common pharmaceuticals. This course explores these issues and hopefully leaves students with a better understanding and awareness of the role of plant-based nutrition in the U.S. health landscape.

Innovations in Public Health: Impact of Technology (2021)

Student Facilitator: Noah Danesh | Faculty Mentor: Robert Kim-Farley

This course focuses on how technology has revolutionized public health in underserved communities. It will give students a holistic sense of what public health is, the fundamental insufficiencies of public health in underserved communities, and different technologies that have risen to meet these challenges. A particular focus throughout the course will be on how innovators recognized an issue in the field and sought out to implement new solutions that helped not only individuals, but whole communities. The positive and negative implications of these innovations will also be covered. We will look at barriers of entry and slow adoption of public health technologies in underserved communities, as well as how technology affects the tradeoff of health and personal privacy. The seminar will help students gain an understanding of the Ecological Model of Public Health and gain the ability to look at technological advancements through the lens of this model.

Effective Communication of Science and Public Health Messages: Convincing Masses (2022)

Student Facilitator: Minh Bui | Faculty Mentor: Alice A. Kuo

Introduction to communication and miscommunication of science and public health messages. Highlight specific examples of miscommunication such as the MMR vaccine link to Autism, Climate change, and COVID-19. Explore the underlying historical, political, and scientific causes of these controversies. Discussion of the adverse effects of these controversies to the scientific and public health field.



The Future of Nutrition in Your Grandmother's Kitchen: Obesity Prevention Through Traditional Foodways (2024)

Student Facilitator: Mariko Hashimoto | Faculty Mentor: William McCarthy

We will be learning from the class material and each other about the roots of our eating habits in cultural customs and evolution. For most of their existence, humans developed gut microbiota and eating habits that optimized their health during years of procuring food from hunting and gathering. We will cover how our gut microbiota, when fed with a diverse range of fiber-rich plant foods, can serve to protect us from some of the most pressing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some epithelial cancers. Then, we will look into the different behavioral challenges that come with diet changes and discuss how we could address them. We will analyze current issues with food insecurity and explore potential solutions. We will learn about the traditional foodways of different cultures and understand how they feed healthy gut microbiota and in turn keep us healthy. We will understand the importance of creating public health solutions that are sensitive to diverse backgrounds as well as unique physical, social, and mental challenges.

International Human Rights and Reproductive Health (2025)

Student Facilitator: Winona Xu | Faculty Mentor: Paula Tavrow

This seminar introduces undergraduate students to the intersection of human rights and public health, with a specific focus on reproductive health and rights in a rapidly globalizing world. Through discussions and critical analysis, students will explore the norms, principles, and frameworks that define the human right to health, emphasizing the legal and policy dimensions of reproductive autonomy. The seminar aims to examine the role of human rights in shaping public health policies, programs, and practices that support reproductive health and rights.

The course is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of human rights principles, tools, and methodologies as they apply to public health. Students will analyze how international human rights frameworks address reproductive health issues, including the impact of political, cultural, and socioeconomic factors. Topics include reproductive autonomy, the demographic transition and declining birth rates, and the COVID-19 pandemic's global effects on reproductive health. Special attention is given to intersectional identities and how they influence reproductive health outcomes. The second part of the seminar shifts focus to reproductive health in practice. Students will examine contemporary challenges, such as disparities in reproductive rights post-Roe v. Wade and the implications for college students in states where reproductive rights are protected. They will critically assess public health policies and their applications to reproductive health at national and international levels. Case studies will provide real-world examples of the intersection of biology, gender, and social determinants of health.

Public Policy

What is Cyberwar? (2011)

Student Facilitator: Millie Tran | Faculty Mentor: Alexandra Lieben

This seminar's objectives are twofold: to define cyberwar and to discuss the future of the internet given this nebulous concept. This course is designed to provide you with a brief introduction to cyberwar as a still evolving and contentious topic, the nature of cyber threats and what all of this means for the internet. To understand and critically engage in this debate on whether the perceived threat is real, we must first define the concept — “What is cyberwar?” We will utilize an interdisciplinary approach, looking at the issue through various lenses and stakeholders.

Scandinavian

Comics: Not Art, Not Literature (2011)

Student Facilitator: Matt Seneca | Faculty Mentor: Patrick Wen

This course will provide an in-depth survey of a unique, vastly underappreciated art form: the comic book. It will chronicle one of modern art history's most fascinating narratives while broadening students' background in and understanding of both literature and visual art. Of special interest will be comics' awakening to literary themes and complexity, and its artists' shaping the medium into a distinct visual/cognitive language. The course will focus on formal innovation, and how it has elevated the medium to the level of craft and expression it is capable of today.

Game of Thrones in Real Life: Ancient Times to the Modern Day (2021)

Student Facilitator: Kavya Juwadi | Faculty Mentor: Arne Lunde

Game of Thrones is arguably the most popular show in the world. For seven seasons, this HBO show captured the attention and hearts of viewers of all different backgrounds. While at face value Game of Thrones might simply be entertaining, the show tackled a wide array of social and political issues. Despite the show being set in a medieval-era fantasy world, the themes that are a part of Game of Thrones are still applicable to the current day. This course provides a guided discussion about themes and ideas that Game of Thrones touched upon that you may not have even realized. The first part of each class will consist of an overview of historical events that relate to Game of Thrones. The latter half of the class will include connecting the historical events to Game of Thrones and modern day issues. The essence of this course is making a connection from the themes in Game of Thrones to real-life events both in the past and current day.

Disability in the Viking Age (2025)

Student Facilitator: Michaela Trelby | Faculty Mentor: Kimberly Ball

In this course we will be discussing the concept of disability in Viking-Age Scandinavia. We will analyze textual and material evidence, including Old Norse religious texts, medieval Icelandic sagas, and archaeological findings. We will explore the way that disability would have impacted many aspects of daily life, including religious beliefs, work, and family life. We will consider what our personal perspectives on disability are, and compare them with the social and cultural landscape of Viking-Age Scandinavia, when examined through the lens of disability studies.

Social Welfare

Student Voice, Student Action: UCLA Takes a Stand (2007)

Student Facilitator: Michael Sob | Faculty Mentor: Duncan Lindsey

What makes college so memorable for undergraduate students? Is it really the academics? Much of the development of the typical undergraduate comes from experiences outside of the classroom. From the shooting at Campbell Hall involving Black Panthers and US and the Chicano-Studies movement, to Unicamp and Dance Marathon @ UCLA, students at this university have ensured that their voices are heard. This course looks at the opportunities, risks, chances, victories, and defeats of students who took what they learned in the classroom and applied it to the global community. These students fought for change- a change for the betterment of not only students across the nation, but also for human beings around the world.

Slavic, East European and Eurasian Languages and Cultures

Environmental Policy of the Soviet Union and Modern-Day Implications (2020)

Student Facilitator: Rowan Baker | Faculty Mentor: Daniel Posner

What comes to mind when you think about the Soviet Union? Communism? Maybe Russia? And what about the environment and the Soviet Union? Perhaps something along the lines of HBO's Chernobyl? These, of course, would be reasonable to think about. But what about the far less traversed intersectional concepts and concerns of communism, the Soviet Union, and the environment? Ever heard of Semipalatinsk, the Holodomor, or the Aral Sea? If not, you are in the right place! In this course, we will explore beyond the borders of Russia to examine the former Republics of the Soviet Union through the lens of Soviet environmental policy. We will focus on some of the greatest environmental disasters that occurred during the Soviet Union and their present-day impacts on the modern countries in which they occurred, from the Baltic Sea to the Kazakhsteppe, and from the Siberian tundra to the southern deserts of Central Asia. Finally, we will do so through an analysis of some of the most pressing issues concerning the environment, ranging from nuclear fallout to indigenous rights.

Society and Genetics

Genetics Just Got Personal: Analyzing the Direct-to-Consumer Genetics Company 23andMe (2012)

Student Facilitator: Rasha Ahmed | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Kelty

In this course, students will learn to analyze complex socio-genetic issues from a multidisciplinary framework. Using 23andMe as a model, the course will investigate the social, scientific, and legal controversies surrounding so-called Direct-to-Consumer genetic companies and explore the impact new genetic technologies have on healthcare, research, selfidentification, and our society. With the cost of whole genome sequencing decreasing rapidly in the wake of the Human Genome Project and with internet usage on the rise, Direct-to-Consumer companies, of which 23andMe is the most prominent, have sprung up promising information on health, disease, and ancestry from a simple spit test uniquely marketed at the average consumer rather than towards health professionals.

God and Monkey-Men: Why Are We Still Fighting About Evolution? (2012)

Student Facilitator: Jennifer Lub | Faculty Mentor: Christopher Kelty

Evolution is arguably the most powerful idea to have arisen in the last two centuries, extending its influence into biology, philosophy, religion, politics, and modern discourse. Since its conception in the 1800s, the theory has been surrounded by fervent controversy proportional to its impact. The controversy has persisted to this day in the United States, where the majority of Americans do not believe in the legitimacy of evolution. How has evolution become such a polarizing topic in the United States today? In this seminar, we will answer this question by exploring the historical basis behind the opinions that have dominated the American discussion of evolution. From the beginnings of the theory to the rise of fundamentalism, we will investigate the scientific, philosophical, and religious influences that have shaped the opinions of Americans today. We will then examine modern day examples of these opinions and brainstorm possible solutions for the problems that this controversy poses for educational policies across the United States.

Beyond CSI: Forensic Applications of DNA Analysis (2013)

Student Facilitator: Rebecca Wang | Faculty Mentor: Wayne Grody

We've all seen crime shows like CSI and Law and Order, but what really happens at a crime scene? How do you find evidence after a murder and use it to track down a criminal? In this course, we will learn how real life crime scene investigators solve crimes by using one of the most powerful tools in forensic science: DNA analysis. This course will give an overview of forensic DNA analysis and its applications in the crime scene and beyond.

Topics include how DNA evidence is collected and presented in court, as well as other applications of forensic science, such as mass identification and disease testing. Throughout the course, we will examine forensic DNA analysis from biological, technical, anthropological, ethical, and legal perspectives in order to comprehensively understand how forensics is used in the real world.

Wrench in the Works: Human Genetic Disorders and How We Live with Our Genes (2014)

Student Facilitator: Elizabeth Earley | Faculty Mentors: Sally Gibbons, Christina Palmer

Being diagnosed with an illness can elicit a spectrum of emotional responses, from indifference to confusion, shame, and fear. Learning of a genetic predisposition to illness, on the other hand, can introduce an entirely new subset of concerns – newfound confusion over the subtleties and ambiguities of genetic testing results, shame over decisions and treatment sought, and fear of one’s future and for the future of family members who may also be affected. In this seminar, we will look closely at the sorts of struggles faced by people at risk for disorders with a genetic basis, with a focus on the forces in society that shape the attitudes, decisions, and treatment options that exist today. Our discussion will draw heavily from media and personal narratives to examine how genetic disorders are understood and incorporated as part of one’s identity. We will mainly examine BRCA-1 and 2 gynecological cancers as a case study, and will compare experiences of BRCA to those of Huntington’s chorea and Alzheimer’s disease.

Inconsistent Dichotomies: Examining the Sex/Gender Binary (2016)

Student Facilitator: Mariab Kolbe | Faculty Mentor: Patrick Allard

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.

A Short History & Critical Examination of Bioethics (2016)

Student Facilitator: Elizabeth Seger | Faculty Mentor: Soraya de Chadarevian

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 an 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 of bioethics in modern medicine and research. What works? Can the bioethics system be improved to better serve science and medicine?

Dolphins: People of the Sea (2017)

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? Investigation of rich, complex lives of dolphins and discovery of meaningful, putatively human aspects we both share: social-emotional relationships, elaborate language and dialects, and remarkable problem-solving behavior. Discussion of issues in captivity and conservation, and exploration of ways to create positive change for our sea-people counterparts, through habitat restoration, sustainable fishing, and environment sustainability.

Reproductive Bioethics (2021)

Student Facilitator: Atreyi Mitra | Faculty Mentor: Michelle Rensel

This seminar will examine the ethical, philosophical, and legal questions of contemporary and future forms of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) by discussing some of the most controversial applications in the field. Topics of critical inquiry will include: the number of embryos transferred each IVF cycle; the legalization of traditional surrogacy; the creation of a donor sibling; the selection for disability; posthumous reproduction; the preservation of fertility for postmenopausal individuals; fate of frozen embryos; embryonic cloning; and in-vitro gametogenesis (IVG). Through academic inquiries and case studies, students will be challenged to assess the implications of emerging reproductive technologies, to decide to what extent they should be regulated, and to imagine what those regulations would feasibly look like.

Going Viral: HIV/AIDS in Social, Biological, and Political Contexts (2021)

Student Facilitator: Sarah Sullivan | Faculty Mentor: Patrick Allard

Exploration of social, political, cultural, and biological underpinnings of HIV and the AIDS epidemic. Incorporates discussions of racial and socioeconomic inequities and stigma surrounding LGBTQ+ identities from medical and public health perspectives.

Ethical Change-Making: Guiding Social Movements on Social Media (2021)

Student Facilitator: Nathan Tran | Faculty Mentor: Nicholas Shapiro

Exploration of how change-making frameworks and theories produce varying results in social change. Development of understanding of how to challenge systems of oppression through lenses of social responsibility, counterculture, reform, and contestation. Critical analysis of Arab Spring, Kony 2012, and Black Lives Matter to evaluate the utility of various social media platforms in advocacy and accompliceship. Course content will lay the foundation for an applied final project, where students will apply concepts discussed to make change in a personally meaningful social issue within their own network.

Covering COVID-19: Science Journalism, Public Health, and Society (2023)

Student Facilitator: Victoria Li | Faculty Mentor: Michelle Rensel

As businesses closed during the pandemic, individuals looked increasingly to online and digital sources for up-to-date information on COVID-19. This course will be about the task of pandemic-era journalism, as well as related efforts to communicate scientific developments to the public. It will focus on the complex process of translating and interpreting scientific research to lay audiences, the role experts play in that process, various intersecting priorities among all stakeholders (e.g., news outlets, public health officials, and the general public), and the effort of combating health misinformation. While other classes have focused solely on public health, or how to become an effective writer, this seminar will focus on our current pandemic reality with an interdisciplinary lens.

Seminal Examples in Environment and Disease (2023)

Student Facilitator: Gurugowtham Ulaganathan | Faculty Mentor: Patrick Allard

How does your environment influence you? Have you ever wondered why some people are more susceptible to their surroundings? This quarter, we will explore some of these exciting questions and with the help of historical case studies and notable scientific research that have been pivotal to our understanding of the role of the Environment in influencing Health Outcomes. We will start in the 1940s with the Dutch Famine and go up to present-day work involving the Gut Microbiome, look at their history, how they have affected the human populace and what we can take away from them. Finally, at the end of the quarter, through an expert Guest Research Lecture and Q&A composed of researchers who study environmental influences on health, you will get a sneak peek at the innovative methods being used in a scientific setting and possibly get involved in research. With that said, I welcome you to the seminar and to a great time!

City to Self: The Story Of Heat in LA's Societal Landscape (2024)

Student Facilitator: Ashwin Vasudevan | Faculty Mentor: Bharat Venkat

While often ignored, heat is a force that impacts all of us every day. Whether it's the heat from the sun, the warmth of our bodies, or the heat generated by our built environment, our relationship with heat is defined by complex factors that include our biology, occupation, society, and psychology. The frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves have been increasing globally since the 1950s. For many, however, the impacts of heat are often ignored or overlooked.

Extreme heat's consequences are widespread, causing discomfort, illness, injury, cognitive decline, and even death. Heat waves damage crops, properties, and livestock, making them the deadliest natural disasters. Beyond direct effects, extreme heat worsens droughts, heightens wildfire risks, and strains power grids, causing disruptions.

This seminar delves into the intersectional impacts of heat and examines its effects on our community. The topic will be explored from a macro to micro scale, looking at broader environmental and community trends to how individuals are affected. Focusing on Los Angeles, the specific environments, communities, and individuals most vulnerable to the impacts of heat and climate change will be emphasized. Through understanding climate science as well as current and historical events and policies, the impacts of this issue will take shape. Overall, this course will break down the complexities of climate change and demonstrate how heat, which is often overlooked, profoundly influences our lives in both direct and indirect ways.

Sociology

Social Feast: An Introduction to Food and Society (2007)

Student Facilitator: Crystal Cheung | Faculty Mentor: Terri Anderson

This seminar uses food as a point of departure to explore the field of sociology. Food is often seen as a matter of personal preference, when, in fact, the choice of food is largely affected by family, school, media, and other agents of socialization. In this course, we will explore “food” as it relates to our personal identities and to society at large. The main questions are: What is food? How does it relate to you personally? How does it relate to the world around you?

Sociology of Facebook and Online Social Networks (2010)

Student Facilitator: Eric Kim | Faculty Mentor: Terri Anderson

Online social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter have dramatically altered the ways in which individuals in society interact with one another. No longer do we give each other phone calls, but instead we simply write on each other’s “Facebook walls.” No longer are our diaries private and kept to ourselves, but instead they are now public and available for all to see on blogs. Although the Internet is overcoming the distance gap in terms of communication, how authentic are these cyber-relationships? Can relationships now be defined by quantity instead of quality? Is the Internet ultimately bringing us closer together, or further apart?

La Jouissance Ultime: Representations of Orgasm in Science, Literature and Film (2013)

Student Facilitator: Jewel Pereyra | Faculty Mentor: Abigail Saguy

Although the United States is deemed a “sex obsessed” culture, ecstatic sexual expression is oftentimes tabooed, hyperbolized or silenced, providing misunderstood and even biased representations of orgasm in popular culture. This seminar asks: How have representations of orgasm and sexual arousal been depicted in science, literature and films? How have images of orgasm shifted historically and why? What are the politics of a “real” orgasm and how is it studied, mythologized, gendered, visualized, written about and performed? By engaging across the disciplines of the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, students will critically assess epistemological and sociological approaches to orgasm, including feminist and queer interventions on embodiment, knowledge productions and reproductive technologies.

Scientific Differences in Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation, and do they make a Difference? (2014)

Student Facilitator: Arash Ghaffari-Rafi | Faculty Mentor: Jerome Rabow

Over 2 million scholarly papers published annually, yet few diseases cured and medical innovation lagging, we question “is the scientific paper a fraud?” We will examine whether most “discoveries” warrant attention or simply emphasize and maintain societal arrangements to entrench inequalities. Students will study the fluidity of race by partaking in a genetic test to trace their own lineage. Topics will include: genetics and race (racism), physiological gender differences and healthcare policy (sexism), neurobiology and sexual orientation (homophobia). Subtopic will include the societal and biological factors behind discrimination. Case studies will review the use of science in determining discriminatory policies (Holocaust in Nazi Germany, South African apartheid, American immigration policy).

Leaning In: Can We Really Break the Glass Ceiling? (2014)

Student Facilitator: Radha Kumar | Faculty Mentor: Abigail Saguy

Despite the tremendous progress women have made in the past century, they only hold 4.2 percent of Fortune 500 CEO positions. In her recent book “Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead,” Sheryl Sandberg addresses some of the reasons why there are few women leaders in the workplace. Sandberg’s book suggests that women can break the glass ceiling if they “lean in” the workplace. Sandberg advises women to sit at the table, find a partner that supports one’s career goals, and to not leave the workplace before they actually start a family. We will critique these claims using sociological and anecdotal evidence. This seminar will examine how race, socio-economic status, and family life affect women’s career mobility. We will also explore men’s increasing contributions to housework and childcare.

Social Identities and Interaction (2015)

Student Facilitator: Lital Slobodsky | Faculty Mentor: Jerome Rabow

People, especially students at liberal colleges and universities, pride themselves on not being racist, not being sexist, and not being homophobic. But in reality, when we look at the general population, most people are not even aware of how they each partake in our prejudiced society. This course is intended to raise awareness about people’s identities in order to help them understand the privileges and difficulties that others outside of their identity have to face. Topics include positive social identity, racism, sexism, homophobia, and division of society into dominants and subordinates. Subtopics include experience and perception of social identities, privilege, and development of identities throughout history. Readings will focus on personal experiences relating to race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Gendered Society: Examining Societal Influences on Sexual Identities through Biology and Sociology (2019)

Student Facilitator: Cory Drew Epstein | Faculty Mentor: Abigail Cope Saguy

Examination of processes by which gender is socially constructed. Topics include distinction between biological sex, sociological gender, sexual orientation, masculinity and femininity, gender inequality, and recent changes in gender relations in modern industrial societies.

You, Me and Our Mental Health (2019)

Student Facilitator: Zarina Jaffer Wong | Faculty Mentor: Michael Gaddis

Interactions with mental health involving the personal and societal stigma surrounding mental illness. An in depth analysis of the history of mental illness and how this history has affected contemporary stigma. Movement from historical ideas of mental illness to modern ideas and treatments of mental illness specifically regarding college campuses. Introduction to CAPS programs across a range of college campuses. Methods range from data analysis to personal anecdotes. These experiences will then be compiled so students may form comprehensive educated opinions about the mental health treatment in America with a focus on colleges.

Spanish

Peru in the Wake of Neoliberalism: Exploring the Politics, Violence & Resistance of the Late 20th-Century (2024)

Student Facilitator: Luciana Micaela Aragon | Faculty Mentor: Luz Maria De La Torre Amagua

This 1-unit undergraduate seminar intends to present an overview of the social, political, and economic instability and unrest that captivated South America in the latter half of the 20th century. We will begin by discussing neoliberalism and the proliferation of its ideals throughout South America before focusing in on Peru to analyze its insurgent guerilla groups, government dictatorships, and economic shocks. Most importantly, however, we will pivot into a discussion of how indigenous Peruvians resisted one of the bloodiest conflicts in Latin America since European colonization. Later in the quarter, we will move into discussion of the Peruvian diaspora today, now larger than it has ever been and with its core population located in the United States. With a special focus on Peru and its Internal Conflict, the course aims to highlight the importance of learning about the diverse experiences of South American, particularly Andean communities, as a conduit to building an empathy and understanding that frames students' interpretations of complex global issues and allows them to recognize liberation as a transnational struggle.

Statistics

Shaping the Future: Machine Learning and Data Science (2017)

Student Facilitator: Connor Hennen | Faculty Mentor: Vivian Lew

Exploration of how the rapidly emerging field of data science will fundamentally revolutionize mechanisms and strategies through which a wide array of industries operate. Examination of how big data can impact campaign strategies of politicians, diagnose and treat disease, determine tactics of sports franchises, drive business strategy, and help develop automated technologies and machines. Introduction to means by which data science is conducted, such as Python programming language, statistical techniques, and algorithms. Consideration of compelling prospect of data science field, machine learning, which enables computers to learn and develop independent of human input.

Surgery

The Art of Surgery: Past, Present, and Future (2009)

Student Facilitator: Kevin Ro | Faculty Mentor: Michael Yeh

For centuries, both practitioners and laymen have been fascinated by the practice of surgery. Surgery has the tremendous ability to cure what medicine alone cannot. Yet at every moment in the operating room, the surgeon knows that the art of surgery is fundamentally a human endeavor, one built upon years of advancement. For this reason, it is crucial to study the history of medicine alongside the current modes of surgical thought, while always thinking about surgery's progression for the future. This course will give students the chance to understand, discuss, and appreciate the vital interplay between surgery's past, present, and future.

Trauma—A Matter of Life or Death (2015)

Student Facilitator: Beatrice Sun | Faculty Mentor: Eric Ley

A devastating motor vehicle accident, a fall from a ladder, a gunshot wound to the chest. Trauma is all around us, but when accidents occur, who is responsible for taking care of the victims? What life-saving measures can be taken immediately after? How is a hospital emergency room structured for efficiency? How is a homeless man treated, and where does he go after leaving the hospital? Exploration of different topics in trauma such as human factors, patient transport, emergency procedures, and policies. Examination of case studies, and discussion of the intersection between trauma and non-medical aspects of society. Introduction to approaching papers and current events from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Theater

Campus Fashion Fix—Exploring the Fashion Industry in regards to American Culture and Identity (2013)

Student Facilitator: Jennifer Lee | Faculty Mentor: Deborah Nadoolman Landis

Dive into the world of fashion in the first-ever UCLA fashion history and design class. Students will gain an insight on the history of fashion in the 20th century by analyzing the methodologies and legacy of distinguished fashion designers: Coco Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior, Diane Von Furstenberg and Rodarte. The second half of the course is focused upon learning basic design techniques to develop a student fashion collection portfolio. "Designing the Century" offers fashion fans and student designers an opportunity to explore and be inspired by the greatest couturiers of all time.

The Queer Perspective within Contemporary Theater (2024)

Student Facilitator: Isaiah Mateas | Faculty Mentor: Daniel Perry

This seminar is centered around identifying and exploring how queer artists, voices, and experiences have shaped contemporary American theater and film as an art form, with an emphasis on a present-day perspective.

This seminar will follow the lineage of contemporary queer history (starting with the Stonewall riots, through the disco era and the realities of the HIV/ AIDS pandemic impact on queer communities, and forward into current day realities) - as a way to see how contemporary American theater has evolved to accurately and inclusively represent the LGBTQIA+ communities.

The seminar begins by defining essential terms and understandings, discussing who and what makes up the queer community and then segues into learning about and discussing late 20th-century queer theatrical works that lead up to this moment in history. The majority of the seminar will be spent looking closely at contemporary theatrical works and identifying how the queer lens amplifies the pieces.

The Queer Perspective within Contemporary Theater (2025)

Student Facilitator: Matthew Beymer | Faculty Mentor: Daniel Perry

Audiences often recognize theater as an act of illusion and a form of escapism from daily life, yet what happens when the dramatic stage reflects audiences' own realities using non-fictive narratives? In this course, we will explore how theater makers (actors, directors, writers) of the 20th and 21st centuries promote justice and accountability for worldwide sociopolitical inequities, using namely Documentary, Verbatim, and Testimonial theater techniques. We will investigate the ethical duties of theater makers and spectators and the tensions between objectivity and subjectivity. We will study play scripts, academic and journalistic articles, podcast and radio recordings, interviews, and archival footage to devise our own unique methods of storytelling.

Urban Planning

The Global Food System—What Happens Between Farm and Plate and Why It Matters (2013)

Student Facilitators: Niran Somasundaram, Joanna Wheaton | Faculty Mentor: Susanna Hecht

The purpose of this course is to equip students with the knowledge and tools necessary to be conscious consumers who understand how their food choices play a role in America's greater food system and culture. Course content, which includes scholarly readings, news articles, video clips and guest lectures, will provide students with a holistic understanding of the political and economic factors influencing the current food system in America as well as this system's associated environmental, social and health externalities. To complement the broad scope of these topics, we will also delve further into more specific subjects, such as the food labeling, the "green" biotech revolution, food deserts, livestock practices and certain staple crops, which student groups will select, research and present to their peers. The latter part of the course will discuss alternative food systems and current food movements, in order to place previously discussed course topics in a contemporary context and emphasize creative solutions and consumer empowerment.

Women's Studies

Friends, Sisters, and Lovers: A Perspective on Breast Cancer (2008)

Student Facilitator: Darlene Edgley | Faculty Mentor: Sharon Bays

This seminar examines the historical, political, and cultural context of breast cancer in women. We will explore the social implications for women diagnosed with breast cancer, including the underpinnings of life with cancer. This course touches on the socioeconomic status (SES) stratification of access to resources for survivorship and explores the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, SES, sexuality, sexual orientation and health care.

Rethinking Citizenship: Immigrant Youth, Gender, and Civic Identity (2011)

Student Facilitator: Amalia Castaneda | Faculty Mentor: Sharon Bays

This seminar seeks to challenge traditional ways of viewing the concepts of citizenship, civic identity and immigration by exploring them through the experiences of Latina immigrant Female Adolescents in South Los Angeles. As South Los Angeles urban communities experience an influx of immigration and consequent demographic transformation, the conventional definitions of citizenship and civic identity become more blurred as they encounter different sets of national, bi-national and sub cultural identities. The predominant definition of citizenship centers on ascribed rights and privileges granted to an individual upon birth or naturalization. Civic identity is a concept used to identify being part of or attached to a given community and/or nationality.

World Arts & Cultures

Message of Resistance: Hip-Hop on the Streets Makes History for Nations (2008)

Student Facilitator: Dilyara Agisheva | Faculty Mentor: La'Tonya Rease Miles

This seminar's purpose is to understand how hip-hop shapes political resistance. As hip-hop spread with the spread of American Culture to all parts of the world, it shaped the identities of youth all over the globe, especially from those communities that are marginalized from the dominant society. As a class, we will also analyze through readings, videos, music-clips, etc., whether hip-hop can contribute to conflict resolution, with such controversial issues as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Social Media for Social Action (2015)

Student Facilitator: Amanda Hoskinson | Faculty Mentor: David Gere

Can changing your profile picture change the world? Do online petitions actually accomplish anything? Why does Facebook want me to donate to Ebola efforts? This seminar will not only allow you to explore these problems; it will provide a sandbox for you to try to fix some of them yourself. Social Media for Social Action is a project-based seminar intended to provide students with theory based social media skills for any industry. This seminar will focus on one sector of social media in particular, social action. Throughout the course students will engage in critical discussion about social media, social action, and where these issues connect. Students will also learn basic non-profit marketing skills on three primary platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). The seminar will culminate in students running a campaign of their own design for the Art and Global Health center, a campus non-profit.

From Identity to Narrative: Exploring Your Voice Through the Arts (2018)

Student Facilitator: Maya Ram | Faculty Mentor: David Gere

This seminar bridges the connection between storytelling, self-empowerment, and social transformation. Throughout the quarter, students explore using their voices in new ways, engaging with their personal narratives, and practicing group sharing in order to embrace the stories of others. This experience is a personal journey, but the resulting storytelling belongs in a broader context within arts activism. This course provides students the opportunity to reflect on their own roles in creating social change, and envision their identities as arts-activists to use their narratives.



How to Fight Social Stigma with Art (2018)

Student Facilitator: Kelly Gluckman | Faculty Mentor: David Gere

Can art inspire real social change? How can we make a positive impact on the world in this social and political climate? This seminar digs into these questions through productive dialogue and creative, artistic action. The journey begins with a foundation of understanding stigma and its effects on intersectional human experiences and identities. Students gather inspiration by experiencing artistic and activist responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the United States as well as other stigmatized circumstances. Finally, we take concrete action by applying our course work through the creation of our own artistic response to stigma in our lives and the world.

Pilgrimage: Ancient Paths & Modern Practice (2023)

Student Facilitator: Aldo Schwartz | Faculty Mentor: Peter Sellars

For thousands of years, people have been walking, climbing, and crawling – through deserts, forests, mountains, and plains – in search of something greater than themselves. Pilgrimage – the ritual procession towards, between, or through sacred sites – is found in nearly every religion and geographic region. But what exactly is a “pilgrimage,” and why would someone embark on one? This course aims to illuminate the varied motives and meanings of pilgrimage in both the ancient and modern world. Through experiential learning, historical case studies, and group discussions, students will explore pilgrimage as ritual devotion and transformation – in both religious and secular contexts. Students will also explore the ways that pilgrimage can inform their own lives by reflecting on personal journeys and making their own pilgrimage routes. By integrating the lessons of pilgrimage practice, students will move forward with vision, purpose, and a willingness to tread new paths for generations to come.

Writing Programs

Wibbly Wobbly Timey Wimey- An Analysis of the Role of Science Fiction Within Society (2020)

Student Facilitator: Hatim Malek | Faculty Mentor: Tara Prescott Johnson

Despite very rarely being examined within an academic setting, the science fiction genre is extremely important due to its analysis of society and humanity. This class is centered around teaching students how to approach science fiction analytically in order to understand the big themes present within the genre, as well as how works choose to approach those themes. Students will be exposed to a variety of science fiction works in a multitude of mediums including literature, television, film, anime, podcasts, and video games. The class will be divided into three large sections. The first section will have students learning what it means for a work to be science fiction. When building a fictional world, what are the different ways that science fiction can be used? In the second section, students will be shown how the science fiction genre comments on the broader social issues present within society. Finally, in the last section of the class students will be given the opportunity to explore some of the key themes present within most science fiction works.

Racial Literacy and its Importance in our Increasingly Social Media Dependent World (2021)

Student Facilitator: Rose Koochekpour | Faculty Mentor: Nedda Nebdizadeh

The creation of social media has transformed our lives in an unprecedented and unimaginable way, having the ability to not only allow us to consume media, but create, post, and influence those within our new social circles. The sphere of influence of social media has grown to include groups of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels. With such a large community of users, the importance of the conscious consumption of social media has become much more important. Social media literacy – the concept of understanding the potentially harmful and beneficial effects of participation in the media – is becoming an increasingly crucial skill to learn, as a lack thereof can perpetuate harmful concepts. As we continue to produce media online, racial literacy additionally becomes vital. In the end, the goal of the seminar is to introduce you to social media and racial literacy in the online universe, and to begin to educate students on the different depths of importance of how the social justice issues we face in the nondigital world manifest themselves online.

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