

Freshman Seminars Spring 2006

SECTOR I: SOCIETY

Popular Culture in Africa

Sandra Barnes, Professor of Anthropology

This course concentrates on popular culture in sub-Saharan Africa. It examines the way people reflect on and represent various aspects and issues in their daily lives, in public media and through a diverse range of performative and creative outlets. It explores the way cultural traditions are created, promulgated and perpetuated. It looks at the way popular culture deals with pleasure and pain; identity difference and diversity; wealth and power; modernity and history; gender relations; suppression, resistance and violence; and local versus global processes. In short, popular culture will serve as a window through which to observe contemporary life.

(Distribution I: Society)

anth 018.401 or afst 018.401 or afrc 018.401 | Wednesday | 2:00-5:00

Culture Clash

Paula Sabloff, Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology

This course is designed to introduce students to the connection between anthropology, philosophy and personal experience. Starting from the anthropological position that many of the social problems of our time are the result of conflict between or within cultures, we will read anthropological accounts—ethnographies—of problems such as globalization, cultural survival, class and ethnic conflict. We will also read the political philosophers from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith to Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu quoted by the anthropologists. In this seminar, students will form their own social theory by integrating the readings with first-hand experience in the West Philadelphia community as they perform community service. In this Academically Based Community Service course, they will turn their personal experience into an anthropology practicum, seeing social theory and anthropology operating “on the ground.”

(Distribution I: Society)

anth 115.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 1:30-3:00

Development Debate in India

Gautam Ghosh, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

There has been a great deal of discussion, of late, about civilization and attacks upon it. This course examines the meaning of “civilization” and “progress” by way of 1) classical sources in social thought, 2) pivotal issues in contemporary cultural anthropology and 3) materials related to India. The course demands close readings of (at times) dense texts, class presentations and papers. The class format combines discussion with lectures.

(Distribution I: Society)

anth 137.401 or sast 137.401 | Monday | 2:00-5:00

Controlling Birth: Controversies and Practices

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, Professor of History and Tradition

Birth control and abortion are controversial topics. They are also medical practices and social

behaviors that have changed over time. This course examines the history of birth control and abortion in the United States since the early 19th century. We will study the various methods that Americans have used to control pregnancy and birth; we will also examine how birth control and abortion as controversial topics have changed over time. As part of our course, we will read some of the Supreme Court decisions that have altered social practices and thereby generated fresh controversy in American life and politics.

hssc 030.301 or hsoc 030.301 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

Issues in American Democracy

Henry Teune, Professor of Political Science

The content of this seminar are the main issues facing the U.S. in the democratic development of its political system. Most of these inhere in the constitutional structures of federalism, divided national political authority and limits on governmental power. Others derive directly from recent social and economic changes, now global in scope. These changes also have impacted other democracies, leading to declining voting participation, increased distrust in government, transformations of the economy and rising insecurities from global terrorism. These challenge the traditional democratic liberties and practices of the u.s. as well as the prospects of a democratic world order.

The topics include American political development, distrust of authority, political participation, inequality, domestic order, the place of the u.s. in the world, cross-generational obligations, American culture and national security. The seminar participants will be divided into task forces that will take positions on issues. Assignments include short position papers for presentation to the seminar, a longer research paper and two final essays.

(Distribution I: Society)

psci 010.301 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

Gender Issues in Contemporary Asia

Emily Hannum, Assistant Professor of Sociology

This seminar offers students an opportunity to read and evaluate recent social science research on pressing gender issues in contemporary Asia. Through writing projects and in-class exercises, students will also conduct their own research in this area. We will focus on the following topics: the missing girls phenomenon, gender and education, gender and labor force participation, the migration of women and mothers, women's reproductive health and rights and trafficking.

Throughout the class, we will consider theories and evidence about how development and globalization affect these topics, and, more broadly, the working and family lives of women and men. The class will be conducted as a mix of overview lectures on substantive topics and on how to access information on these topics; discussions of books and articles; student research exercises and presentations; and film viewing and discussion. (Distribution I: Society)

soci 041.401 or ealc 014.401 or wstd 041.401 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

SECTOR II: HISTORY AND TRADITION

The Rise and Fall of Ancient Maya Civilization

Jeremy Sabloff, Professor of Anthropology

The civilization of the ancient Maya, which flourished between approximately 1000 b.c. and the Spanish Conquest of the 16th century AD in what is now southern Mexico and northern Central

America, has long been of wide public interest. The soaring temples of Tikal, the beautiful palaces of Palenque, the sophisticated carved monuments and sculpture, and the complex writing, astronomical and mathematical systems of this pre-industrial civilization have been widely photographed and written about. However, revolutionary advances in archaeological research which have provided important new data about the farmers and craftspeople who supported the great Maya rulers, and the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing over the past two decades have led to the overthrow of the traditional model of Lowland Maya civilization and the growth of new understandings of the development of Lowland Maya civilization, the rise of urban states and the successful adaptation to a difficult and varied tropical environment. Through a series of case studies, this seminar will examine the research that has led to these new insights and will evaluate the exciting new models of Maya civilization and its achievements that have emerged in recent years.

(Distribution II: History & Tradition)

anth 032.401 or lals 032.401 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

Native People and the Environment

Clark Erickson, Associate Professor of Anthropology

The relationship between the activities of native peoples and the environment is a complex and contentious issue. One perspective argues that native peoples had little impact on the environments because of their low population densities, limited technology, and conservation ethic and worldview. At the other extreme, biodiversity, and Nature itself, is considered the product of a long history of human activities. This seminar will examine the Myth of the Ecologically Noble Savage, the Myth of the Pristine Environment, the alliance between native peoples and Green Politics, and the contribution of native peoples to appropriate technology, sustainable development and conservation of biodiversity. (Distribution II: History & Tradition)

anth 133.401 or lals 133.401 | Tuesday & Thursday | 12:00-1:30

History of American Education

Anita Gelburd, Assistant to the Deputy Provost and Lecturer in History

This course will examine the history of education and educational institutions in the United States from the 1600's to the present. We will look at elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, with an emphasis on higher education in the post-Civil War era. In particular, we will discuss the socio-cultural environment in which educational institutions have functioned at different points in American history, and see how policy decisions about education interact with other sociological trends. (Distribution II: History & Tradition)

hist 104.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 10:30-12:00

Imagining the American Woman: Textual and Visual Representations of Women in the United States, 1860-2006

Marlis Schweitzer, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

For centuries, American women have sought inspiration and guidance in sources ranging from etiquette books, self-help manuals, fashion magazines and literature to motion pictures, romance novels, television, video games and the Internet. These sources often promote idealized notions of womanhood that do not reflect the daily experiences and desires of real women and so must be read by historians with caution. Nevertheless, an analysis of textual and visual representations

of the “American woman” from the mid-19th century to today offers an intriguing perspective on the social and cultural environment in which these works emerged. This course is designed to encourage students to develop their ability to read and interpret primary sources, while charting important historical shifts in gender ideology (as well as ideologies of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ablebodiedness and nationality). Over the semester we will address questions such as: Who created these representations and why? What social/political purpose do they serve? How do they reflect the cultural interests and anxieties of the period in question? Who is absent from these depictions and why? How might these depictions have limited and/or enabled “real” women’s self-development? Possible topics include: Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*; Sarah Josepha Hale’s *Godey’s Lady’s Book*; the “Gibson Girl” and other “American Girls”; Edward Bok and *The Ladies’ Home Journal*; Dorothy Parker and the “flapper”; Harlequin romances; *Sex and the City*; *The Oprah Winfrey Show*; *Lara Croft* and *Tomb Raider*. (Distribution II: History & Tradition)

hist 104.302 | Thursday | 1:30-4:30

Introductory to Philosophy

Rory Goggins and M. Zermatt Scutt, Lecturers in Philosophy

An introductory survey of some central philosophical issues, including: Are free will and determinism compatible? How can the existence of God be reconciled with the existence of evil and suffering? Can war ever be morally justified? Readings will be taken from both contemporary and historical sources.

(General Requirement II: History & Tradition)

phil 001.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 3:00-4:30

phil 001.302 | Tuesday & Thursday | 10:30-12:00

Crime and Punishment

Eric Schneider, Adjunct Associate Professor of History

How have definitions of crime and forms of punishment changed over time? What have been the uses and legacy of extra-legal violence? How have the forms of crime and punishment reflected the structure of American society? Using both historical and contemporary texts, this freshman seminar will explore these and other questions and in the process analyze the development of juvenile justice, the organization of corrections, the application of the death penalty and the rise of the drug economy. (Distribution II: History & Tradition)

urbs 110.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 3:00-4:30

SECTOR III: ARTS AND LETTERS

Spiegel Seminar: Contemporary Art and the Retrospective

Jonathan Binstock, Curator of Contemporary Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Visiting Lecturer in the History of Art

Explore the world of contemporary art by studying important “retrospective” exhibitions, which survey the life work of artists. Following a brief introduction to major movements in art since 1960, students will read major retrospective catalogues from past exhibitions and visit retrospectives that are currently on view. The course is taught by the Curator of Contemporary Art at Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., who is now organizing a large retrospective. Students will be able to learn about the making of an exhibition from the inside and develop an

understanding of both contemporary art and curatorial practices. (Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

arth 100.301 | Wednesday | 2:00-5:00

Dada and Surrealism: The Sleep of Reason

Stephen Petersen, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

“If you’re alive, you are a Dadaist” (Richard Huelsenbeck). Formed in 1916 as an international protest against the perceived madness of European civilization entering into World War I, the absurdist Dada movement broke down barriers between art and life, logic and imagination, word and image, and aesthetics and politics, pioneering new mixed-media forms of expression. In 1924, a group of Dada poets in Paris went on to invent Surrealism, arguing that the unconscious mind held the key to ultimate reality. Influenced by the recent work of Sigmund Freud, the Surrealists developed verbal and visual techniques for communicating the irrational depths of the human psyche. This class will look at how the radical, experimental approaches of Dada and Surrealism have revolutionized Western art, literature and film, from Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dali to David Lynch. We will visit the major Dada exhibit this spring at the National Gallery in Washington, d.c. and make use of the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s important collections of Dada and Surrealist art. Students will undertake research projects that may incorporate Dada and Surrealist methods. (Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

arth 100.302 | Monday | 2:00-5:00

Reading Pictures and Seeing Words: The Role of Imagery in Medieval Art and Thought

Lynn Ransom, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

The medieval world was a highly visual culture in which art played a fundamental role in reflecting and determining cultural values. Because of the political and social dominance of the Church in both the Latin west and Byzantine east, religious art was also a tool in defining and enforcing various ideologies. The nature and role of art in medieval society was, however, fraught with complications. The Bible forbade the worship of graven images, and much ink was spilled over whether imagery should be allowed in a religious context, and if it was going to be used, to what extent and why. This class will explore the role of the image in medieval society from early Christian times to the eve of the Protestant Reformation. We will specifically look at the various uses of medieval art in relation to writings about the role of imagery in liturgical practice and private devotion. We will also examine related issues of patronage, audience and literacy in order to gain a better understanding of how medieval viewers confronted, interpreted and used the images that dominated their cultural life. (Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

arth 100.303 | Tuesday | 3:00-6:00

Speaking and Writing in Ancient Greece

Alexandra Pappas, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

You may have learned that Homer’s epic poems, the Iliad and Odyssey, were transmitted orally or reflect an “oral culture.” But around the same time as Homer, in the 8th century bce, the Greek alphabet was born, and with it, some degree of literacy. Over the next 200 years, people began to inscribe all kinds of objects with their new alphabet: shepherds scratched graffiti on

rural cliffs; craftsmen etched and painted words on temples, statues and cups used at drinking parties; Greek politicians inscribed laws on stone and set them up in public places. In the 5th and 4th centuries, writing allowed authors like Herodotus, Sophocles, Aristophanes and Plato to create the histories, tragedies, comedies and philosophical treatises that now form the canon of Western literature. And, finally, in the age of Alexander the Great, scholars began collecting papyrus rolls of literary works and storing them in libraries.

But who knew how to write in ancient Greece? How many people could read what was written? Was writing somehow meaningful to those who could not read it? How should we define “literacy”? And how did levels of literacy change over time? We’ll discuss and debate these points both in and out of the classroom, drawing on ancient literary texts and inscriptions, objects at the University museum, slides in class, images available online and more. (Distribution III:

Arts & Letters)

clst 101.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 9:00-10:30

Discipline and Punish: Crime and Criminality in Early America

David Kazanjian, Associate Professor of English

With more than 1.3 million people in domestic prisons, and an increasing number of people in its detention centers abroad, the United States has come to be known around the world as a leader in imprisonment. This situation has a history which this seminar will examine by reading the literature of crime in early America. We will read 17th, 18th and 19th-century fictional and political texts written about crime and by criminals -- texts about pirates, capital punishment, riots, revolutions, slavery and prisons. Along the way, we will also read one of the most influential 20th-century theories of criminality, Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975). Our task will be to understand how the very ideas of crime and the criminal were re-formulated between the 17th and 19th-centuries, and to see how Foucault’s text can help us in this understanding. We will also consider what this history tells us about our current moment. We will pay particular attention to the criminalization of racial minorities, women and poor people by slavery, colonization and capital accumulation. This will be an interdisciplinary course combining literature, history and political theory. It will also take advantage of the historical resources of Philadelphia, a key city in the history of early American criminality, by researching local archives as well as the Eastern State Penitentiary, one of America’s earliest modern prisons.

(Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

engl 016.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 3:00- 4:30

Seeing and Believing in 19th Century America

Marcy Dinius, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

This class will examine a range of “texts” from 19th-century American print and visual culture that dramatize, challenge and/or confirm “seeing is believing,” including Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*, Melville’s *Pierre*, Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* and Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, as well as selected paintings, photographs, engravings and advertisements. In our discussions, we will consider a range of socio-historical contexts for these works, including race, class and gender as well as aesthetics, politics and science, and explore the dialectics of word and image, seeing and knowing, truth and fiction, and representation and reality in antebellum American culture. Questions to be addressed

include: What is the relationship between the artist, his/her work, an audience and reality in these texts? On what terms can we begin to understand literary and visual texts comparatively? What aspects of artistic creation do these texts suggest are perennial issues for art and artists, for America as a nation and a culture and for humankind more broadly?

(Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

engl 016.302 | Tuesday & Thursday | 9:00-10:30

Philadelphia Poetry: Two Rivers, Many Voices

Deborah Burnham, Lecturer in English

We'll begin by reading poems by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, who spent some of their formative years here at Penn, reading poems to each other. We'll also look carefully at volumes by Susan Stewart and Eleanor Wilner, each of whom achieve an astonishing engagement with parts of the world often ignored or invisible. By the end of the semester, we'll have read deeply in poems that celebrate and interrogate city life, sometimes with joy, sometimes with anger. We'll read about street corners, newsstands, babies, fights, reconciliations, rivers, trolleys, school, dogs and the occasional TastyKake. Many of the poets we read are young, some very traditional, some experimental. Short writing assignments, a few of them creative, a final project on a poet or a locus of Philadelphia poetry, lots of conversation and collaboration. No previous experience with poetry necessary. Please feel free to email

dburnham@english.upenn.edu with questions. (Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

engl 016.401 or wstd 016.401 | Monday & Wednesday | 2:00-3:30

Fundamentals of Acting

Rose Malague, Senior Lecturer in Theatre Arts

Acting "looks" easy. Audiences see actors portraying characters, but often remain unaware of the intellectual, emotional, physical and technical skills required to create vivid theatrical behavior. What makes an actor effective? This course is an introduction to acting theory and practice, with primary emphasis on Stanislavsky-based techniques. Combining practical experience (exercises, improvisations, scene work) with intellectual exploration (theoretical readings, script analyses, writing assignments), the class culminates in the performance of a scene from the modern repertoire. Introduction to Acting also serves as an ideal introduction to the practical aspects of Penn's Theatre Arts major, with guest artists/teachers and trips to theatrical productions.

Students considering a theatre major are especially encouraged to enroll.

(Distribution III: Arts & Letters)

thar 120.302 | Tuesday & Thursday | 12:00 – 1:30

SECTOR V: THE LIVING WORLD

Language and Cognition

David Embick, Assistant Professor of Linguistics

Because of its apparently species-specific nature, language is central to the study of the human mind. We will pursue an interdisciplinary approach to such questions in this course, moving from the structures of language as revealed by linguistic theory to connections with a number of related fields that are broadly referred to as the "cognitive sciences". A number of specific topics will be addressed from these related fields. The structures of language and its role in human cognition will be set against the background of animal communication systems. We will examine

the question of how children acquire extremely complex linguistic systems without explicit instruction, drawing on psychological work on the language abilities of children. Additional attention will be focused on the question of how language is represented and computed in the brain, and, correspondingly, how this is studied with brain-imaging techniques. (General Requirement V: Living World)
ling 058.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 3:00-4:30

SECTOR VI: THE PHYSICAL WORLD

The Big Bang and Beyond

Paul Langacker, Professor of Physics and Astronomy

An introductory course for freshmen who do not intend to major in a physical science or engineering, covering theories of the Universe ranging from the ancient perspective to the contemporary hot big bang model, including some notions of Einstein's special and general theories of relativity. Topics will include the solar system, stars, black holes, galaxies and the structure, origin and future of the Universe itself. Elementary algebra is used.

(General Requirement VI: The Physical World)
astr 007.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 9:00-10:30

Structural Biology and Genomics Seminar

Ponzy Lu, Professor of Chemistry

Structural biology is the scientific method of describing, predicting and changing the properties of living organisms, including humans, based on "complete" genome chemical structures (sequence) and 3-dimensional structures of cellular components. It is a direct outgrowth of the intellectual and technical revolutions that occurred during the last decade of the 20th century. It has become the approach of choice for understanding biology and solving problems in medicine. We will discuss how macroscopic biological properties, such as reproduction, locomotion and viral infection, are determined by chemical properties of proteins and nucleic acids. Changes in biological function, such as those that accompany hereditary diseases like cystic fibrosis or sickle cell anemia, result from minute changes in individual proteins. Much larger changes in genome and protein structure are often tolerated without apparent consequence. This selectivity and tolerance provides opportunities for the biotechnology industry to alter biological functions in ways thought to guarantee profits.

We will also examine how research results in structural biology are presented in various audiences. The broad range of medical, social and political problems associated with the advances will be considered. We will attempt to distinguish real progress from fads and fashion. This is a two-semester seminar that continues from fall 2005 with 0.5 course unit each semester.
(General Requirement VI: The Physical World)
chem 022.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Honors Physics II

Gene Mele, Professor of Physics and Astronomy

This course parallels and extends the content of phys 151, at a somewhat higher mathematical level. Recommended for well-prepared students in engineering and the physical sciences, and particularly for those planning to major in physics. Electric and magnetic fields; Coulomb's, Ampere's and Faraday's laws; special relativity; Maxwell's equations, electromagnetic radiation.

(General Requirement VI: The Physical World)

phys 171.301 (lec) | Monday, Wednesday and Friday | 10:00-11:00

| Monday 2:00 – 3:00 | Thursday | 5:00-6:00

phys 171.302 (lab) | Wednesday | 1:00-3:00

phys 171.303 (lab) | Friday | 1:00-3:00

SECTOR VII: SCIENCE STUDIES

Neuroethics: Bioethical Issues in Cognitive Neuroscience

Martha Farah, Professor of Psychology

"Neuroethics" is the new name of a new field, at the intersection of bioethics and neuroscience.

In this seminar we will explore the issues that arise at this interface. These include the social and moral implications of new developments in psychopharmacology, brain-machine interfaces and psychosurgery (ways of manipulating the brain and mind) and of new developments in functional neuroimaging (ways of monitoring the mind and brain). Our class has two goals: To educate you about some of these ethically loaded scientific developments and to help you formulate a view of whether and when such work should proceed, through reading and discussion of relevant literature in bioethics and history/sociology of science.

Psyc 059.301 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

NOT SECTORED

Decent with Modification: An Introduction to the Science of Evolution

Paul Sniegowski, Associate Professor of Biology

Evolution provides the unifying framework for the biological sciences and has been confirmed by a huge and diverse body of evidence. Public opinion polls show, however, that evolution continues to be socially and politically controversial in the United States. In this seminar, we will explore the scientific basis for evolution by reading and discussing historical sources, a current nonspecialist text on evolution and selected papers and articles from the scientific and popular literature. With our knowledge of evolutionary fact and theory as background, we will also discuss social and political opposition to the teaching of evolution.

Grading will be based on participation in class discussions and on performance in several brief writing assignments. There is no course prerequisite, but high school introductory biology would be helpful.

biol 014.301 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:30

Proving Things: Algebra

Angela Gibney, Assistant Professor of Mathematics

This course focuses on the creative side of mathematics, with an emphasis on discovery, reasoning, proofs and effective communication, while at the same time studying arithmetic, algebra, linear algebra, groups, rings and fields. Small class sizes permit an informal, discussion-type atmosphere, and often the entire class works together on a given problem. Homework is intended to be thought-provoking, rather than skill-sharpening.

math 203.001 (lec) | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 12:00-1:00

math 203.101 (lab) | Tuesday | 6:30-8:30

math 203.102 (lab) | Thursday | 6:30-8:30

