

Freshman Seminars Spring 2008

Sector I: Society

Desire and Demand: Culture and Consumption in the Global Marketplace

Marilynne Diggs-Thompson, House Dean, Riepe College House

Does consumption shape culture or does culture shape consumption? Does the archaic term “errand running” now fall under the heading of “power shopping”? As even the most mundane purchase becomes socially symbolic and culturally meaningful we can now persuasively argue that the concept of “need” has been transformed. Selling electronics, music, food, clothes and accessories: who are the players behind the crafting of some of these markets to be elaborately seductive shopping spaces? When successful selling must account for differences in age, gender, ethnicity, language and even religion, how is demand created and how are diverse populations “sold”? From New Delhi to New York, we ask the question: has the process of globalization also homogenized consumption? Is shopping really pop culture and exactly how has this pastime become inextricably bound to issues of self-image, social status and identity? By analyzing a variety of physical and virtual shopping venues in different countries this seminar examines the process of shopping in the global marketplace. How have issues of culture, consumption, marketing, and global capitalism become intertwined around the world?

anth 086.301 | Monday | 2:00 - 5:00

Popular Culture in Africa

Sandra Barnes, Professor Emeritus 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.

Also fulfills the Cross-Cultural Analysis Requirement.

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

Issues in American Democracy

Henry Teune, Professor of Political Science

The main issues facing the U.S. in the democratic development of its political system is the content of this seminar. Most of these issues inhere in the constitutional structures of federalism, divided national political authority and limits on governmental powers. Others derive directly from social and economic changes, now global in scope. These changes also impact other democracies—declining voting participation, increased distrust in government, transformations of the economy and rising insecurities from global terrorism. They 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, personal security, the place of the U.S. in the world, cross-generational obligations,

American culture and national security. The seminar will be divided into task forces that will take positions on issues for presentations. Assignments include short position papers for discussion in the seminar, a longer research paper and two final essays.

psci 010.301 | Tuesday | 1:30 – 4:30

Sector II: History & Tradition

The First Crusade

Edward Peters, Professor of History

This seminar will examine the penitential military expedition to Jerusalem that was launched in November, 1095, conquered the city in July, 1099, and was subsequently called by historians, but not by participants, the First Crusade. We will study the individuals, ideas and events of those years through the close examination of primary historical sources (texts and other materials produced at the time or shortly after) and through the consideration of selected secondary source materials (historical and other scholarship). We will also consider serious disputes among contemporary historians of the crusades. We will consider the three distinctive civilizations, parts or all of which were affected by the expedition: Latin Christian Europe, Greek Christian Byzantium (the Empire of East Rome) and the Middle Eastern (and Mediterranean western) Islamic world, as well as the culture of Jews in all three worlds. We will also consider the later interpretation of the expedition by historians, novelists, poets, politicians and others that is the First Crusade in cultural memory.

hist 101.301 | Monday | 2:00 – 5:00

Massacres in History

Mark Doyle, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

Many of the most important political and social movements in modern history have started with a massacre, or so it is often claimed. John Adams called the night of the Boston Massacre the moment when an independent America was founded. In India, nationalists look to the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, when the British Army killed some 1,000 protesters, as a vital catalyst in their successful

independence movement. Similar examples, from Ireland to South Africa, abound.

But who decides when an event merits the term massacre, and what is the value of attaching this highly charged term to particular outbreaks of violence? How does a massacre start, and why do people participate in them? In this course, we will examine both the power of massacres to galvanize movements for social and political change as well as the ways in which stories about massacres are told and remembered. Along the way, students will be challenged to think critically about their own responses to stories about violence, power and victimhood.

hist 106.301 | Wednesday | 2:00 – 5:00

Conspiracies in History

Lee Cassanelli, Professor of History

Throughout history, ideas of “conspiracy” have helped people explain events that otherwise seem unexplainable, have justified repressive measures against individuals or groups believed to be conspiring, and have stirred the imaginations and shaped the public agendas of communities and sometimes entire nations. Case studies will include charges of conspiracy raised against

religious sects (European freemasons, Chinese secret societies, the Catholic Church), political and economic movements (Mau-Mau in colonial Kenya, communist parties, Molly Maguires), and such phenomena as the Mafia, the Broederbond of South Africa, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy. Students will examine the historical evidence, the social significance, and the political consequences of particular “conspiracies” with the aim of comparing and generalizing over time and space.

hist 106.302 | Monday & Wednesday | 3:30 – 5:00

The Contexts of Hispanic Civilization

José Regueiro, Associate Professor of Romance Languages

The primary aim of this course is to develop students’ knowledge of the geographical, historical and cultural contexts in which Spanish is used. At the same time that they are introduced to research techniques and materials available in Spanish, students strengthen their language skills through reading, oral presentations, video viewing and essays. The course is designed to give students a broad understanding of Hispanic culture that will prepare them for upper-level course work.

Prerequisite: span 212. Also fulfills Cross-Cultural Analysis Requirement.

span 219.305 | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 12:00 – 1:00

Sector III: Arts & Letters

Spiegel Freshman Seminar: Andy Warhol

Ingrid Schaffner, Senior Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art

Soup Cans are the tip of the iceberg. Impacting culture on every front—art, music, fashion, film, design, popular culture and the media—Andy Warhol is one of the iconic figures of the 20th century. And in 1965 the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at the University of Pennsylvania made art history by presenting Warhol’s first museum exhibition. The project of this seminar will be to explore Warhol’s career through the fiction of a sequel exhibition that the class will collectively organize based on individual presentations and roundtable discussion. Emphasis is on research and writing to produce everything from the press release to catalog entries for the mock museum show. A field trip to the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh is planned.

arth 100.301 |

Modern American Poetry

Josephine Park, Assistant Professor of English

This course will consider 20th-century innovations in American poetry. We will begin with the two contrasting figureheads of modern American verse: Walt Whitman, with his open and capacious lines, and Emily Dickinson, with her incisive and sharpened words. With these foundational poles in mind, we will read a range of poetic voices: in the early part of the century, the instigations of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and the rich forms of the Harlem Renaissance; in mid-century, the beats and confessional verse; and at the century’s end, cultural and experimental turns. Course requirements include two essays and shorter response papers.

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

Modern Primitivism

Judith Brown, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities

Forum

King Kong, Josephine Baker, Picasso's masks, Freud's "dark continent"—why has the twentieth century been so drawn to the idea of the primitive? In this class, we'll think about ideas of origin and authenticity in relation to the primitive, beginning with the 18th-century image of the "noble savage," and primarily focusing on the twentieth century's appropriation of Africa for both mass entertainment and high art. Modern artists and writers seemed to think that the primitive offered them something—what was it? Did Picasso's use of the African mask, for example, make his work more modern? More original? In order to respond to these questions, we'll look at some visual art (Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, Man Ray), watch some film (including King Kong and Josephine Baker's Princess Tam Tam), read some poetry and fiction (including poems by Langston Hughes and fiction by Joseph Conrad), and read some of the century's most influential critical work (by Freud and his postcolonial critics). The class will be small, discussion-based, and committed to serious engagement with the questions of race, colonialism and modern aesthetics raised by the 20th-century representation of the primitive.

engl 016.302 | Monday & Wednesday | 3:30 – 5:00

Perspectives in French Literature

Lance Donaldson-Evans, Professor of Romance Languages

This basic course in literature provides an overview of French literature and acquaints students with major literary trends through the study of representative works from each major period. Special emphasis is placed on close reading of texts in order to familiarize students with major authors and their characteristics, and also with current methods of interpretation. This course will pay particular attention to the interplay between the Individual and Society in the texts to be studied. Also fulfills the Cross-Cultural Analysis Requirement.

fren 222.401 | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 11:00 – 12:00

Lords of the Ring

Christina Frei, Senior Lecturer and Director of Language Instruction, Germanic Languages and Literatures

Since the 1960s, the Lord of the Rings books gained increasing popularity and have become an enduring cult success, which was exceeded with the release of the film trilogy. The Lord of the Rings is a global brand. Its public presence exceeds that of any other literature and its commercial potential seems limitless, evident not just in the unsurpassed box office success and critical acclaim for the films, but also in the clever global merchandising of games, action figurines, gift items and jewelry. In this course, you will trace the power of the tale of the ring from J.R.R. Tolkien to Richard Wagner, from the Middle High German epic the Nibelungenlied to the Norse poetry of The Saga of the Volsungs, and back to the 20th century with Thomas Mann's The Blood of the Walsungs. You will read stories of unrequited love, betrayal, magical powers, and the deeds of dragon slayers and question the lasting appeal these tales present for today's global commerce.

One Ring to rule them all. One Ring to find them. One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them. In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie. -J.R.R. Tolkien

grmn 002.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 10:30 – 12:00

Petrarch and Boccaccio

Frank Pellicone, Adjunct Professor of Romance Languages, House Dean of Harnwell College

House

Before there was Seinfeld and Bono, before there could be Chaucer, Shakespeare or South Park, there was Boccaccio and Petrarch, two Florentine contemporaries, friends and rivals for public acclaim who pushed the limits of fiction, poetry and prose in the creation of some of the greatest works of all time. In this course, we will closely read Boccaccio's Decameron and Petrarch's Canzoniere, as well as selections from other works of these two great authors. Through readings, discussion, and further research we will consider how these two authors impacted the sensibilities of our 21st century world of celebrity, pop culture and sex scandals. We will explore how sex and love take alternatively comic and tragic turns in the worlds of these two authors, discuss the importance of myth in the formation of identity, and the ways that fiction can provide the foundation for knowledge and redemption.

All readings will be in English, with some discussion of the original language. No knowledge of Italian is required.

ital 100.301 | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 2:00 – 3:00

Italian Comic Film

Stefania Benini, Assistant Professor of Romance Languages

In this course we will explore a popular genre in Italian cinema whose roots date back to the Commedia dell'Arte theatrical tradition. We will investigate the portrait of Italian society expressed through comic films, particularly in the golden age of Commedia all'Italiana, between the late 50's and the early 70's, with the tragicomic plots of Monicelli's, Comencini's, Risi's and Germi's films used as a powerful commentary on the social malaise of the Italian economic miracle. We will then approach the latest aspects of the genre, through the contributions of talented comic actors and/or directors such as Nichetti, Benigni, Troisi, Moretti, Salvatores, Virzi and Soldini. The course will also discuss theories of comedy with reference to Aristotle, Freud, Bergson and Bakhtin among others.

The course will be taught in English. May be counted toward an Italian Studies major or minor.

ital 100.401 or cine 140.401 | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 1:00 – 2:00

Sector IV: Humanities & Social Sciences

Medicine, Culture and Bioethics in Japan

William LaFleur, Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

This seminar constitutes an exercise in comparison by looking at how the practice of medicine in Japan differs from that in America. Japan, where people enjoy good health and live very long lives, not only combines "Western" with "Eastern" medical practices but also is a place where questions of bio-technology and bioethics are often faced differently than they are in America. Texts, films, and an in-class look at acupuncture will form the basis for class discussions and short written papers. A comparative look at what cultures might think differently about the body, the mind, and healing and/or dying processes will be the central focus of this seminar. In 2008 this course will be enhanced by the in-class participation of Professor Gernot Böhme, a world-renowned philosopher of science and at Penn for two weeks at the invitation of our Provost.

ealc 063.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 3:00 – 4:30

Feet of Clay and the Arcanum

Matt Courney and Sumi Maeshima, Lecturers in Fine Arts

An introduction to three-dimensional art through clay, this course introduces students to the fundamental language of object making through a hands-on experience with clay material. Students develop their visual skills by creating sculptural forms as well as pottery forms such as cups, bowls and jars. Each project is presented with clear demonstrations and individual instructions. The first half of the semester will focus on hand-building methods that includes pinching, coiling, and slab-building and the students will learn to throw at the potters wheel in the latter half of the semester. Reading assignments including the history of porcelain, slide presentations, and a field trip will broaden the understanding of object making.
fnar 007.301 | Tuesday | 1:30 – 4:30

What is Cancer? Disease, Society, History

Robert Aronowitz, Associate Professor of Health and Societies

What is cancer? What causes cancer? What do its high prevalence and devastating effects tell us about ourselves and our society? What can we do about it? Laboratory researchers, epidemiologists, public health officials, medical specialists, environmental activists and cancer patients have offered different and incomplete answers to such questions. Students will learn about these different perspectives by analyzing historical documents and scholarship from different disciplines and professions, meeting with health professionals and others, and doing writing and research assignments.
hsoc 058.301 | Thursday | 1:30 – 4:30

The History and Politics of Place

Eric Schneider, Associate Director of Academic Affairs, Adjunct Associate Professor of History

How do we understand the places in which we live? How do we “read” a city? What is the relationship between workplace and home, downtown and suburb, inner city and gated communities, department store and mall, row house and ranch house? How are our lives defined by place, and how do we function as both the producers and products of place? The city is a social and a spatial system, and its organization both reflects and reproduces social categories of race, class and gender. The current city is also the product of past decisions about where to locate communities and how to allocate resources. Through reading sociological, historical, theoretical, and primary texts, through studying maps and photographs, and through your ethnographic explorations, we will explore the presence of the past in the city around us, the evolution of different kinds of urban and suburban places, and the encoding of wealth and power as well as inequality and poverty in the urban landscape.
urbs 012.301 | Monday | 2:00 – 5:00

Sector VI: Physical World

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 2007 with 0.5 course unit each semester. chem 022.301 | Tuesday & Thursday | 8:00 am – 9:00 am

Honors Physics II

Eugene 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. Topics include electric and magnetic fields; Coulomb's, Ampere's, and Faraday's laws; special relativity; Maxwell's equations, electromagnetic radiation. Also fulfills the Quantitative Data Analysis Requirement.

phys 171.301 (sem) | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 10:00 – 11:00 | Monday | 2:00 – 3:00

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

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

Freshman Seminar in Mathematics

Proving Things: Algebra

Antonella Grassi, 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) | Tuesday & Thursday | 12:00 – 1:30

math 203.101 (lab) | Monday | 6:30 – 8:30 pm

math 203.102 (lab) | Wednesday | 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Seminar with an Emphasis on Writing

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. Fulfills the Writing Requirement.

anth 009.301 | Tuesday | 1:30 – 4:30

