

Freshman Seminars Spring 2009

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.

ANTH 018.401/AFST 018.301/AFRC 018.301 | Wed | 2:00-5:00PM

Marx - Free Radicals: Marx, Marxism, and the Culture of Revolution *

Eric Jarosinski, Assistant Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures

A spectre is haunting Europe the spectre of Communism: This, the famous opening line of The Communist Manifesto, will guide this course's exploration of the history, legacy, and potential future of Karl Marx's most important texts and ideas, even long after Communism has been pronounced dead. Contextualizing Marx within a tradition of radical thought regarding politics, religion, and sexuality, we will focus on the philosophical, political, and cultural origins and implications of his ideas. Our work will center on the question of how his writings seek to counter or exploit various tendencies of the time; how they align with the work of Nietzsche, Freud, and other radical thinkers to follow; and how they might continue to haunt us today. We will begin by discussing key works by Marx himself, examining ways in which he is both influenced by and appeals to many of the same fantasies, desires, and anxieties encoded in the literature, arts, and intellectual currents of the time. In examining his legacy, we will focus on elaborations or challenges to his ideas, particularly within cultural criticism, postwar protest movements, and the cultural politics of the Cold War. In conclusion, we will turn to the question of Marxism or Post-Marxism today, asking what promise Marx's ideas might still hold in a world vastly different from his own.

GRMN 247.401 | Mon & Wed | 2:00-3:30PM

Ethics, Technology and the Life Sciences

Jonathan Moreno, Professor of Medical Ethics and of History and Sociology of Science

In this seminar we will explore the roles and functions of the bioethicist, a new profession that has only emerged in the past quarter century or so, and the new field of bioethics. Bioethicists work in hospitals on clinical ethics, in medical schools and research facilities on experimentation ethics, in public policy and, more recently, in the political arena. We will also explore bioethical theories and specific issues and cases like stem cell research and the Schiavo controversy, and discuss the history of bioethics. And we will pay close attention to bioethical issues in politics and the media during the semester.

HSOC 051.301 | Tues | 3:00-6:00PM

Issues in American Democracy

Henry Teune, Professor of Political Science

The content of this seminar is the main issues facing the U.S. in its democratic political development. The topics include distemper with authority, political participation, inequality, the place of the U.S. in the world, cross-generational obligations, the integrity of American culture, and national security.

PSCI 010.301 | Tues | 1:30-4:30PM

Social Inequality: How Does it Shape Daily Life?

Annette Lareau, Professor of Sociology

Americans generally believe in the possibility of upward mobility, particularly if individuals work hard. This course examines this belief. Can Americans born into poverty succeed if they work hard? What are the prospects for a child of a physician and a child of a janitor? How do children of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds fare in America? This sociology class will investigate inequality in the employment, schools, and family life as well as others arenas of daily life. (Fulfills the Cultural Diversity in the U.S. Requirement.)

SOCI 041.301 | Wed | 2:00-5:00PM

SECTOR II: HISTORY & 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 sixteenth century A.D. 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 hieroglyphics 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.

ANTH 032.401/LALS 032.301 | Tues | 1:30 | 4:30PM

African American Religion, Politics, and Culture

Barbara Savage, Professor of History

This course offers in-depth readings about the place of African American religion in American politics and culture. Stretching from the 19th century to the present, the readings examine the complicated and conflicted relationship between black religion and black politics and the many contributions of black religious culture to American popular culture, including in music, art, film, and literature. There is an emphasis on applying critical reading, discussion, and writing

skills to these subjects. (Fulfills the Cultural Diversity in the U.S. Requirement.)
HIST 104.401/AFRC 103.401 | Wed | 2:00-5:00PM

Creating American History

Bruce Kuklick, Professor of History

In this course students will be reading a number of defining books in American history primary sources, biographies, novels, works of social science. We will range from the Puritans to the 1970s, and be trying to understand how the authors have shaped our understanding of what American history is; we will also be trying to understand what assumptions have gone into the works of the authors themselves. Each student, each week, will write a two-page (600 word) paper on the week's reading. The twelve papers and informed discussion in the seminar will determine your grade. (Benjamin Franklin Seminar)
HIST 114.301 | Mon | 2:00-5:00PM

Text Message: From Telegraph to Cell Phone

Mara Mills, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the History and Sociology of Science

Camera, computer, music player, game console, global positioning system: Is a cell phone still a telephone? This course examines the convergence of different technologies and cultures in telephony since the late nineteenth century. We will survey the technical development of the telephone, from its roots in telegraphy to the first radio and portable phones to the present era of mobile computing. Along the way, we will consider the medium in a variety of social contexts: national and transnational telephone cultures; the genres of text messaging and cell phone novels; the relationship of communication technology to public, private, and virtual space.
STSC 061.301 | Wed | 2:00-5:00PM

Laboratory Life [*](#)

John Ceccatti, Lecturer in History and Sociology of Science

The scientific laboratory is a familiar setting for much of modern science. But what makes a lab a lab? In this Freshman Seminar, we will explore how the modern scientific laboratory came into existence, the variations in organization and structure they have, and how a laboratory space may contribute to the production of scientific knowledge that occurs within (or outside of) its walls. We will survey a range of labs throughout history - from the solitary and secretive confines of the medieval alchemist to the social, political, and economic complexities of nuclear particle accelerators. We will also explore labs in industry, warfare, and popular culture.
STSC 119.301 | Thurs | 5:00-8:00PM

SECTOR III: ARTS & LETTERS

Sites, Places and Monuments

Monica Amor, History of Art

This seminar will explore the thorny issues of site specificity, memory, and monumentality in contemporary art. Sessions will be organized around readings and specific works. We will trace site specificity's genealogy in the work of the sixties and seventies (Smithson, Matta-Clark, Serra) and will map the experimental terrain they engendered in the sculptural reversals that followed: (Wodiczko, Jaar, Whiteread). Issues of memory and representation in public space will be addressed through the work of artists engaging the notion of the "counter monument" and

monumentality and of exhibitions which attempted to articulate similar issues. Finally, we will discuss "aesthetic agency," community oriented work, and collaborative projects produced in the last ten years. The seminar will also familiarize students with crucial texts on the topic such as Rosalind Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1986), Pierre Nora's "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," and James E. Young's "Memory/Monument" (2003) among others.

ARTH 100.301 | Tues | 1:30-4:30PM

Writing about Reading Medieval Art at Penn

Robert Maxwell, Associate Professor of History of Art

Did you ever want to hold a priceless 600-year old book in your hands and leaf through its pages? Here's your chance. In this seminar focusing on one of Penn's most treasured illuminated manuscripts, a private 15th-century prayer book, we will become medieval readers as we read its texts and images. Yet what does it mean to read a medieval image? How can we interpret the images through the text, and vice versa? To answer these questions, we will put ourselves in the position of medieval readers as we try, just as they did, to decipher the meaning of the manuscripts paintings. The course will include a basic introduction to illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. We will focus, however, on writing about Penn's manuscript: writing about the images, about the text, and about the experience (alienating, uncanny, frightening, or familiar?) of writing about reading. This course will emphasize short writing assignments, as well as in-class writing and peer-review assignments. Final portfolios will include students' analyses of individual sections of the manuscript.

ARTH 100.302 | Wed | 2:00-5:00PM

Contexts of Poetic Innovation: William Carlos Williams and Robert Creeley

Bob Perelman, Professor of English

We will take an in-depth look at how two of the most important innovators of their respective generations, William Carlos Williams and Robert Creeley, made their way to successful poetic careers. We will focus on their formative years, examining the contexts (poetry magazines, significant books) that they faced at the outset of their careers. Each of them edited a literary magazine for a few years, and we will also look at how they operated as editors. Students will edit their own literary magazines.

ENGL 016.303 | Tues & Thurs | 9:00-10:30AM

The Burden of Representation

Heather Love, Assistant Professor of English

What does it mean to be a person? In this course, we will approach this question by considering how individuals are represented in film, literature, photography, art, the social sciences, and medicine. In particular, the course explores the representation of social otherness: how are particular kinds of bodies marked as different and what are the consequences of such acts of categorization? We will be looking at the roots of social stigma in ancient practices of branding slaves and criminals and at the development of the idea of the normal or average man in the modern period. Our work will touch on related scholarship in the fields of disability, critical race, and gender and sexuality studies; however, the focus will be on particular representations of otherness. Writings by Jacob Riis, W. E. B. Du Bois, Djuna Barnes, Carson McCullers, Frantz Fanon, Erving Goffman, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, and others. Films by: D. W. Griffith,

Douglas Sirk, Frederick Wiseman, and Forugh Farrokhzad. In a final unit we read several recent graphic novels.

ENGL 016.401 | Tues & Thurs | 1:30-3:00PM

The Devil's Pact in Literature, Music and Film *

Simon Richter, Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures

For centuries the pact with the devil has signified humankind's desire to surpass the limits of human knowledge and power. From the age of Martin Luther to the time of Mick Jagger, from Marlowe and Goethe to key Hollywood films, the legend of the devil's pact continues to be useful for exploring our fascination with forbidden powers.

GRMN 256.401/CINE 352.401/COML 241.401/RELS 236.401 | Mon & Wed | 12:00-1:00PM

The Beatles

Gary Tomlinson, Professor of Music

This seminar will scrutinize closely the music of the Beatles through the life of the group, from 1960 to 1970. We will aim to describe the phenomenon that was the Beatles from several vantage points: a delineation of the sociocultural context that helped foster their unprecedented impact; an understanding of the mesh of personalities in the group that resulted in a new kind of rock and pop music collaboration; and--most importantly--a close analysis of the musical features of the Beatles' recorded output and related rock and pop styles. Students interested in this course need not come equipped with any musical experience other than enthusiasm for the music involved.

MUSC 016.301 | Tues & Thurs | 10:30AM-12:00PM

Freshman Seminar: Film Music/Film Sound

Carolyn Abbate, Professor of Music

"Film Music" is usually understood to mean a score written to serve as background on the soundtrack. We'll be looking at film music in this sense. But we'll be going beyond it, to consider the ways in which music dictates continuity or gesture; how screenwriters and directors deal with music or musical performance as a narrative element; and how sound technology intersected at various points in the history of film with theories of music and meaning. Being able to read musical scores is not a prerequisite for this course, but some experience with classical music is taken for granted.

MUSC 016.302 | Tues & Thurs | 12:00-1:30PM

SECTOR IV: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Translating Cultures: Literatures in and on Translation *

Kathryn Hellerstein, Associate Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures

"Languages are not strangers to one another," writes the great critic and translator Walter Benjamin. Yet two people who speak different languages have a difficult time talking to one another, unless they both know a third, common language or can find someone who knows both their languages to translate what they want to say. Without translation, most of us would not be able to read the Bible or Homer, the foundations of Western culture. Americans wouldn't know much about the cultures of Europe, China, Africa, South America, and the Middle East. And people who live in or come from these places would not know much about American culture.

Without translation, Americans would not know much about the diversity of cultures within America. The very fabric of our world depends upon translation between people, between cultures, between texts. With a diverse group of readings—autobiography, fiction, poetry, anthropology, and literary theory—this course will address some fundamental questions about translating language and culture. What does it mean to translate? How do we read a text in translation? What does it mean to live between two languages? Who is a translator? What are different kinds of literary and cultural translation? What are their principles and theories? Their assumptions and practices? Their effects on and implications for the individual and the society? (Benjamin Franklin Seminar)

GRMN 264.401 / JWST 264.401 / COML 260.401 | Tues & Thurs | 1:30-3:00PM

Contemporary American Theatre and Drama [*](#)

James Schlatter, Senior Lecturer in Theatre Arts

Historically, great civic and national cultures have been identified with, even defined by, the greatness of their theatre. Today, the American theatre is thriving due to the immense creativity and commitment of our playwrights and other theatre artists, the enthusiastic engagement of a wide and diverse audience, and a vigorous spirit of public dialogue. This course will investigate the American theatre today as an indispensable cultural and social asset. Students will examine new plays, research theatre companies and individual theatre artists, discuss articles on theatre in national publications, and attend theatre performances. Guest speakers will share their experience working in Philadelphia, one of the country's most exciting regional theatre centers. Students will make oral presentations, write performance analyses and a final analytical or research essay. The course will include a New York theatre trip. Students do not need to have experience in theatre to take this course. Non-theatre students are welcome.

THAR 275.402 | Tues & Thurs | 1:30-2:50PM

The City [*](#)

Eric Schneider, Adjunct Associate Professor of History

This course is an introduction to major forces that shape cities and urban life in the United States from the 18th century to the present, with a focus on Philadelphia. Through weekly assignments and discussions, students will examine the physical formation and historical development of cities and learn to "read" the sociological and geographic organization of the contemporary city. Prominent themes include urban growth, decline, and restructuring; the ecological bases of urban life; race, class, and gender relations in urban space; and the formation and re-formation of neighborhoods, downtowns and suburbs.

URBS 210.401/HIST 210.401

SECTOR VI: THE PHYSICAL WORLD

NOTE: ASTR 007, The Big Bang and Beyond, was incorrectly listed as a Sector VI: Physical World course. The course actually belongs to Sector VII: Natural Sciences & Mathematics. However, for the spring 2009 semester only the College will honor requests for ASTR 007 to fulfill either Sector VI or Sector VII (but not both).

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 latter part of the 20th century. It is today's approach to understanding biology and solving problems in medicine.

We will discuss how macroscopic biological properties, such as reproduction, locomotion and viral infection, are determined by the physics and chemistry of proteins and nucleic acids.

Changes in biological function, in 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 consequence. Understanding and exploiting these phenomena at the molecular level is the basis of new technology in the agricultural, energy and drug industries. 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. CHEM 022.301 | Tues & Thurs | 8:00-9:00AM

Honors Physics II: Electromagnetism and Radiation

Larry Gladney, 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. PHYS 171.301 | Mon, Wed & Fri | 10:00-11:00AM

SECTOR VII: NATURAL SCIENCES & MATHEMATICS

The Big Bang and Beyond

Vijay Balasubramanian, Associate 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. Fulfills quantitative data analysis requirement.

ASTR 007.301 | Tues & Thurs | 10:30-11:00AM

The Next Millennium: Would technology help us resolve the environmental dilemma?

M'Hamed Bokreta, Lecturer in Earth and Environmental Science

Jorge Santiago-Aviles, Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering

Over the last century we have witnessed the dominance of man over nature. Technology, our understanding of our environment and our consumption habits have been the principal weapons used to achieve this conquest. Now, at the beginning of a new millennium, many questions and concerns about our actions and perceptions are being raised. Can today's technology and the new knowledge about our environment and human nature assure our survival? How can we use the next one hundred years to reconstruct and restore our future? These are the fundamental questions that the class will investigate. The course will rely on evidence, the use of hypothesis and theories, logic as well as the students' scientific inquiry and creativity. We will discuss

systems, models and simulations, constancy, patterns of change, evolution and scale.
ENVS 098.301 | Tues | 7:00-10:00PM

Freshman Seminar with an Emphasis on Writing

The Development Debate in India

Gautam Ghosh, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

This writing seminar examines various meanings of and approaches to development in the contemporary world. It will be guided by three questions: 1) what is development? 2) what are the pros and cons of development? 3) what are the mechanisms for development (i.e. who is empowered to enact it)? A central concern will be the complex interrelationships between development, on the one hand, and civilization, (post)colonialism, modernization and globalization on the other. Other issues will include: different perspectives on development within the world system; appraising the changing measures of development and underdevelopment; the role of the main public and private development agencies; the cultural construction of well being, including perceptions of underdevelopment; development as consumerism; local resistance or acquiescence to development; future/alternative development scenarios. Although the course considers general issues, the focus will be on South Asia.

(Writing Seminar)

ANTH 009.401/WRIT 013.401 | Mon | 2:00-5:00PM

Freshman Seminar with an Emphasis on Mathematics

A freshman seminar in analysis will be offered in the fall. Students may register for one or both semesters. One or the other of these seminars is required for the Math major, but both are open to all students interested in mathematics. The best time to take these seminars is in the freshman or sophomore year. These courses do not satisfy a General Education Requirement, but virtually all students who take them will also take calculus, which does satisfy the Formal Reasoning and Analysis Requirement.

Proving Things: Algebra

Ron Donagi, 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, Tues & Thurs | 12:00-1:30PM