

Freshman Seminars Spring 2010

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/AFRC 018.401/AFST 018.401 | Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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? (CDUC)

ANTH 086.301 | Monday | 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

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. Most of these inhere in the constitutional structures of federalism, divided national political authority, and limits on government. Others derive directly from social and economic changes, now global in scale. These changes challenge the traditional democratic liberties and practices of the U.S. as well as its aspiration for a democratic world order. All established democracies confront declining voting participation, increasing distrust in government, transforming economies, and rising insecurities from global terrorism. We will explore the dynamics of these issues through country comparisons. 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. In addition, the capacity of

the U.S. governmental system to respond to crises will be addressed.
PSCI 010.301 | Tuesday | 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Business & Politics in Developing Countries

Devesh Kapur, Associate Professor of Political Science

The purpose of the seminar is to understand the relationship between business and politics (or relatedly between state and capital) in developing countries, the factors which shape this relationship and its consequences. The seminar will analyze the difference between markets and ownership, the mechanisms by which business and politics influence each other and the implications for economic growth and equity. How do the characteristics of a country's politics as well as those of businesses—the sectors in which they operate, their market share, whether they are multinational or domestic firms, whether they are export—oriented affect this interaction? Finally we will examine the effects of globalization of markets on domestic politics in developing countries. The seminar readings draw upon both conceptual and historical material from a wide range of disciplines and geographical settings.

PSCI 010.302 | Thursday | 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Mistakes, Accidents and Disasters

Charles Bosk, Professor of Sociology

The purpose of this seminar is to provide a basic understanding of some rather ubiquitous social phenomena: mistakes, accidents and disasters. We will look at these misfirings across a number of institutional domains: aviation, nuclear power plants, and medicine. Our goal is to understand how organizations think about these phenomena, how they develop strategies of prevention, how these strategies of prevention create new vulnerabilities to different sorts of mishaps, how organizations respond when things go awry, and how they plan for disasters. At the same time we will be concerned with certain tensions in the sociological view of accidents, mistakes and disasters at the organizational level and at the level of the individual. Accidents, mistakes and disasters are embedded in organizational complexities; as such, they are no one's fault. At the same time, as we seek explanations for these adverse events, we seek out whom to blame and whom to punish. We will explore throughout the semester the tension between a view that sees adverse events as the result of flawed organizational processes versus a view that sees these events as a result of flawed individuals.

SOCI 041.301 | Tuesday and Thursday | 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

SECTOR II: HISTORY & TRADITION

Race, Genetics & Social Policy

Ruth Cowan, Professor of History & Sociology of Science

What box do you check if a form asks you to identify your race? Do you fall between boxes? Do you check two or three? Or none? Do you refuse to answer the question even you can check one box? "What is your race?" is a loaded question in American society, because racial identities have social, political and economic ramifications. This course is designed to examine the meanings of race, in particular the ones that have been thought to have a scientific or biological foundation. We will examine the origins of these questions of race from the end of the 19th century to the present, and the way that the genetic science of race has shaped social policy and has changed over time. Most of our focus will be on the United States, but we will also set these

questions in a transnational perspective.

STSC 022.401/HSOC 022.401 | Tuesday | 1:30 p.m.-4:30p.m.

SECTOR III: ARTS & LETTERS

“Reading” Medieval Art at Penn

Robert A. 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 prayerbook, 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 manuscript’s messages. The course will include a basic introduction to illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, and will include short writing assignments about Penn’s manuscript. Some class sessions will be spent looking at priceless manuscripts in other Philadelphia collections (the Museum of Art, the Free Library) that are normally inaccessible to the public.

ARTH 100.301 | Wednesday | 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Spiegel Freshman Seminar:

Native American Films & Photographs: A Bridge to Indian Country

Karen Beckman, Associate Professor of the History of Art

Timothy Powell, Senior Research Scientist at the University Museum

The course will allow students access to rare films and photographs made by Navajo Indians in the Penn Museums archives and to Ojibwe Indian Sacred Pipe Carriers and students who are exploring the innovative use of film and digital technologies to preserve their language and culture. In addition to working with the Penn Museum archives, our research will include trips to the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Museum, and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. to look at how Native American culture is archived and displayed within the museum space, focusing in particular on the use of film and photography. The Ojibwe section of the course will offer Penn students the unique opportunity to travel to the Ojibwe Indian reservations of northern Minnesota, where they will be hosted by a Sacred Pipe Carrier who teaches at Itasca Community College (ICC) in the heart of Ojibwe country. Tim Powell, Director of Digital Partnerships with Indian Communities (DPIC), has been working with Ojibwe tribal historians and Sacred Pipe Carriers for the past eight years to create Gibagadinamaagoom: An Ojibwe Digital Archive in partnership with the Mass Communications department at ICC. The project has produced fifty hours of video and 35 digital images of objects from the Penn Museum. Students would work in teams to curate digital exhibits using this archival material that could then be exhibited on the DPIC website.

ARTH 100.403/CINE 100.403/ENG 016.403 | Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Gender, Sexuality & the Modern Novel: Virginia Woolf & Company

Andrew Gaedtke, Lecturer in English

How might a person’s sexual life be understood as an effect of language? Could gender be not simply a biological fact but also a narrative that we (or others) tell about ourselves? This course will examine a tradition of literary and theoretical writings that are guided by these questions,

and we will organize our inquiry around the work and life of one of the most influential writers on the subject, Virginia Woolf. We will ask how Woolf's novels and essays challenged normative ways of being in the world and illuminated the discursive techniques by which "normalcy" is enforced. We will also examine works by Woolf's fellow-travelers in London's famous Bloomsbury group, such as E.M. Forster and Vita Sackville-West, whose novels also addressed the painful prohibitions on "improper" desire. Finally, we will consider the persistence of Woolf's legacy in recent fiction and in contemporary feminist and queer theory, including works by Michael Cunningham, Jeanette Winterson, Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, and Judith Butler. Requirements will include several short papers and one longer paper.
ENGL 016.401/GSOC 016.401 | Monday, Wednesday and Friday | 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Phototextuality: The Art of Photographs in Literary Texts

Thadious Davis, Professor of English

Expanding the definition of phototext to encompass literary texts employing photographic techniques as well as photographs, this seminar will explore the interactions between the visual and the verbal, the uses of photography in textual representation, and the intersection of photography and narrative. Texts will include *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes and *On Photography* by Susan Sontag, and texts selected from Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Dorothy Allison's *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, Natasha Trethewey's *Native Guard*, Walter Mosley's *Black Betty*, James Agee and Walker Evans's *Now Let Us Praise Famous Men*, Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices*, and Langston Hughes's *Sweet Flypaper of Life*. Several films, such as *Daughters of the Dust* and *The Bridges of Madison County*, will be screened.

ENGL 016.402 /AFRC 016.402 | Monday & Wednesday | 2:00 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.

Film Music: From Silents to the Sixties

Carolyn Abbate, Professor of Music

This seminar will explore the relationship between music and image in the movies, starting with silent films of the 1920s, and concentrating on classic films from Hollywood and Europe. We raise questions about many issues: what is music's role in creating emotion or mood; how does musical sound interact with drama and narrative; how do developments in sound technology influence composers and directors. We will do a "guided screening" of one film every week, with discussion and commentary (during the Tuesday class). Written assignments include two reviews of movies in current release, as well as a paper and a final project. Students interested in this class should have some knowledge of classical music and composers (whether through playing an instrument or listening to classical repertoire), and should love cinema.

MUSC 016.301 | Tues & Thurs | 12:00-1:30PM

SECTOR IV: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Native American Art & Architecture

Robert Preucel, Professor of Anthropology

What exactly is Native American art? Is it fine art or is it ethnic art? Or is this not a useful distinction. This course is an introduction to the art and archeology of the indigenous peoples of North America. The regional coverage includes the continental United States and Canada,

focusing on the peoples of the Northeast, the Midwest, the Southwest, the Plains, the Pacific Northwest, and the Arctic and Subarctic. Topics addressed include art and artifact, function and symbol, innovation and tradition, and museums and repatriation. Special attention will be given to the changing relations between the art market, museums, and contemporary native peoples. The course will make extensive use of the exhibits and archaeology and ethnographic collections of the University Museum.

ANTH 052.401 | Monday | 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Introduction to Philosophy

We will reflect on the following fundamental questions: What is the nature of underlying reality? What are the scope and limits of human knowledge? Does God exist? What is the ultimate nature of persons? Do we have free will? Where do our moral and political obligations come from, and what are these obligations? These questions do not have obvious or uncontroversial answers. Students will develop analytic thinking skills to develop and to defend their own answers to these questions, and students will gain an understanding of how answers to these abstract questions impact a range of practical questions.

Douglas Wec, Lecturer in Philosophy: PHIL 001.301 | Tuesday and Thursday | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Krisanna Scheiter, Lecturer in Philosophy: PHIL 001.302 | Tuesday and Thursday | 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Marcy Latta, Lecturer in Philosophy: PHIL 001.303 | Monday and Wednesday | 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

SECTOR VI: THE PHYSICAL WORLD

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 | Monday, Wednesday and Friday | 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Sector VII: Natural Sciences and Mathematics

The Big Bang and Beyond

Ravi Sheth, 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.

ASTR 007.301 | Tuesday and Thursday | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.