

Freshman Seminars

SPRING 2011

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? As even the most mundane purchase becomes socially symbolic and culturally meaningful we can persuasively argue that the concept of "need" has been transformed. Analyzing a variety of physical and virtual consumer venues, the goal of this seminar is to understand and to analyze historical and contemporary issues related to a culture of consumption. We investigate social and political-economic factors that impact when and how people purchase goods and argue that behavior attached to consumption includes a nexus of influences that may change periodically in response to external factors. Readings and research assignments are interdisciplinary and require a critical analyses of global/local linkages. The city of Philadelphia becomes the seminar's laboratory as we ask how have issues of culture, consumption, and global capitalism become intertwined around the world?

Cultural Diversity in the U.S.

ANTH 086 301

Monday | 2:00 p.m. to 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 markets and 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. The seminar will be divided into task forces that will take positions on issues for discussion. Written assignments are short position papers for presentation to the seminar, a longer research paper, and two final essays.

PSCI 010 301

Tuesday | 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Culture Wars in Politics**Neil Malhotra**, *Associate Professor of Political Science*

In his address to the 1992 Republican National Convention, Patrick Buchanan said: "There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself." Since the 1960s, a major question about American voters has been whether cultural and social issues have been increasingly dividing the nation politically, transplanting economic issues as the main cleavage defining American politics. To what extent do people vote on social issues as opposed to economic concerns? What effect does this have on political polarization and public policy? This course will explore these issues by critically analyzing several recent books written about the role of economic and cultural concerns among the modern American electorate.

PSCI 010 302

Monday | 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Poverty and Social Exclusion**Kristen Harknett**, *Assistant Professor of Sociology*

In this semester, we will focus on inequality in the distribution of resources in the U.S. population. We start by examining basic necessities such as food, shelter, and health care. Then, we consider who has access to the best neighborhoods and the best schools and the processes by which others are excluded. We will also discuss who performs the most dangerous and the lowest paying jobs in the U.S. labor market and who lacks access to jobs of any type. To encourage active engagement with course material, students will be required to complete short written assignments each week related to the assigned readings.

SOCI 041 301

Monday | 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sector II - History & Tradition**Drugs & Violence in Modern Mexico****Paul Gillingham**, *Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum and History*

This seminar analyzes Mexico's drugs war of the last two decades in historical and comparative context. Outside representations of Mexico tend to swing between the sublime and the ridiculous; the contemporary period is no exception. On one hand, the country's peaceful democratic transition wins plaudits. On the other, the volume and violence of the international drugs trade, which is credited with some 30,000 deaths in the last four years, are represented as auguries of imminent state collapse. Students will question both of these simplifications by examining Mexico's peculiar modern history, spanning one of the world's great social revolutions and the "perfect dictatorship" that ended it. The recent past can then be explored as the meeting of that peculiar history with the standard pressures and incentives of one of the world's great businesses: selling drugs. Students in this course will read across the social sciences and beyond, incorporating short stories, journalism, cartoons and films (all in translation) to gain an interdisciplinary grasp of why the drugs war exists and what it means for contemporary Mexicans.

HIST 106 401 LALS 107 401

Monday | 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Lives in Science

Ruth Cowan, *Professor of History*

We will read biographies of some of the great scientists and engineers of the past, and will discuss our reading with some of Penn's great scientists and engineers of the present--all in an effort to understand the pleasures and frustrations of such lives. Students will also learn how to conduct an interview and will write a biography of a living scientist or engineer as the major term project.

STSC 024 301

Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sector III - Arts & Letters

Medieval and Early Modern Reader

Marina Johnston, *Lecturer in Romance Languages*

What was life like in the Italy of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period? What did people believe in and how did their beliefs shape individual lives, society, and culture at large? In order to find the answers to these questions, we will read and discuss a variety of literary and visual texts by the most significant medieval and early modern Italian writers and artists, ranging from Saint Francis and Giotto to Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli, by way of the three Crowns of Florence – Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio – Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Angelo Poliziano, Botticelli, and others. We will learn how to analyze a text so that it reveals much more than what is immediately apparent at a first reading or at first sight and see how religion, science, literature and the arts were closely interrelated. Classes will be conducted in English and all written materials will be available in English translation. The course may be counted towards the Major or Minor in Italian Studies.

Cross-Cultural Analysis

ITAL 100 401 COML 107 401

Tuesday and Thursday | 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Sector IV - Humanities & Social Sciences

Spiegel Freshman Seminar: Contemporary Art and The Art Of Curating

Kenneth Goldsmith, *Lecturer in the History of Art*

Continuation of year-long seminar from the fall. Students enrolled in the fall need to register again for the spring portion of this course.

ARTH 100 301

Thursday | 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Songs, Manuscripts, and Politics in Medieval Paris

Dr. Emma Dillon, *Professor of Music*

This seminar will examine the artistic culture of the great urban center of the Middle Ages: Paris. Our focus will be on a manuscript, made around 1317 by scribes, artists, poets, and musicians of the city, and which was likely destined for a royal reader: King Philip V of France, whose palace was just a stone's throw from the great cathedral of Notre Dame on the Ile de la Cité. The book contains an extraordinary array of poems, songs, chronicles, and some of the most imaginative programs of illumination to appear in manuscripts of this period. It is justly regarded today as a treasure of French culture. Together, the book's contents tell a story of political complaint about the recent past, and anxiety about the future of the French royal line. They also reflect a vibrant world of artistic creativity that lay just beyond the bindings and folios of the manuscript, and so as well as illuminating the strife of the royal court, the book is also a mirror to the wider traditions of songs and poetry in the city. Throughout the semester, students will work closely with the manuscript (in facsimile and online). We will explore what it has to tell us about the arts and politics of medieval Paris in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and also how the contents of the book worked together, rather like an opera, to stage its political messages. Students will also have the opportunity to work hands-on with medieval manuscripts, and will learn basic skills for working with ancient sources.

MUSC 016 301

Tuesday and Thursday | 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Introduction to Philosophy

Matthew Bateman, *Lecturer in Philosophy*

An introduction to such topics as our knowledge of the material world, the relation of mind and body, the existence of God, and the nature of morality. Readings from both historical and contemporary sources.

PHIL 001 301

Tuesday and Thursday | 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Sector VII - Natural Sciences & Mathematics

Structural Biology and Genomics

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. The intellectual and technical revolutions that occurred during the 20th century made this possible. 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. The weekly reading assignment will be Science and the Tuesday New York Times. This is a two-semester seminar for students in the Vagelos Molecular Life Sciences program that continues from fall 2010 with 0.5 credit unit each semester.

CHEM 022 301

Tuesday and Thursday | 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

The Next Millenium: Would Technology Help Us Resolve the Environmental Dilemma?

Krimo Bokreta, House Dean, Kings Court English College House

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

Tuesday | 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Seminars in Mathematics**Proving Things: Algebra*****Andreea Nicoara***, 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.

Note: This seminar does not satisfy a General Education Requirement. Virtually all students who take it will also take calculus, which does satisfy the Formal Reasoning and Analysis Requirement.

Students must enroll in both the lecture and one of these labs:

MATH 203.101 (lab) Monday 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

MATH 203.102 (lab) Wednesday 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

MATH 203 001

Tuesday and Thursday | 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Writing Seminar**"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 writing 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 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.

WRIT 015 401 ARTH 009 401

Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Other seminars open to freshmen (no sector)

Introduction to Latin American and Latino Studies

Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, Associate Professor of History

Designed to introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of Latin American and Latino Studies, this is a seminar oriented toward first and second year students. Readings will range widely, from scholarly work on the colonial world that followed from and pushed back against the "conquest"; to literary and artistic explorations of Latin American identities; to social scientists' explorations of how Latinos are changing the United States in the current generation.

Cross-Cultural Analysis

HIST 072 401 LALS 072 401

Tuesday and Thursday | 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Genes and Human History

Eugene Park, Associate Professor of History

This seminar examines various issues on human genetics as they relate to both prehistory and history. Focusing on recent studies on Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA haplotypes that reveal approximately when and where, respectively, a living male's patrilineal ancestors and a living female's matrilineal ancestors lived and how they migrated, this course considers biological bases for concepts of kinship, ethnicity, and race as well as critiquing them as constructs. Some of the more specific topics include: the amount of Neanderthal genes in the DNA pool of living human beings; the origins of blue eyes; the "priestly" DNA among some Jewish men; the 20 million direct male descendants of Chinggis Khan in Eurasia; and the black descendants of Thomas Jefferson. Though not required, the students will be encouraged to order the haplotype-testing kit from the Genographic Project to find out their haplotypes and write a final paper that tries to narrate the history of the student's patrilineal or matrilineal ancestors. Of course, those who choose not to do so can write on other topics relevant for the course. Although many readings will require some scientific knowledge, all are chosen to appeal to non-specialist readers.

HIST 233 301

Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Art, the State and the New Citizen in Contemporary Literature of Latin America

Rachel Ellis, Lecturer B in Romance Languages

The Cuban Revolution, the national, economic and architectural promise of Mexican modernity, and Allende's election in Chile mark three distinct moments in Latin American history of tension and hope. But Pinochet's coup that ended in Allende's death, the massacre of Tlatelolco following the occupation of the UNAM by Mexico's military, and the persecution of dissidents, queers, and artists in Cuba's early days of revolutionary institutionalization mark swiftly composed counterpoints to the hopes and the tensions of the former "events." This course will focus on a cluster of major texts within three national literary traditions: Chilean, Mexican and Cuban. The time frame is basically from 1950 into today. In each context this time frame will allow us to question the impossible knot between the artist and the state, given the state's over-exertions of power and art's, especially literature's, imperative to imagine the possibilities of a new citizenship. Neruda's *Canto General*, Eltit's *E. Luminata*, Bolaño's *By Night in Chile* and possibly

Lemebel's *My Tender Matador* will be the first cluster. Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* and Bolaño's *Amulet* will form the cluster of Mexican texts. And the Cuban literary grouping will be Cabrera Infante's *Three Trapped Tigers*, Arenas' *The Color of Summer* and Ena Lucía Portela's *One Hundred Bottles*. Films will be viewed/read with each section, and may include: one work by Chilean director, Raul Ruiz; *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, *Rojo Amanecer*, and *Amores Perros*; *Soy Cuba* and *Suite Habana*.

Cross-Cultural Analysis

ROML 290 401 ENGL 270 401 LALS 291 401 COML 284 401

Tuesday and Thursday | 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.