Spring 2017 USIE Seminars

Biomedical Research

Limitations of Science: Pseudoscience, Research Misconduct, and Fraudulent Discoveries

Student Facilitator: Arielle Tripp | Faculty Mentor: Rafael Romero

Do cellphones cause cancer? Does marijuana eat your brain? Are BPA-free plastic bottles really safe? Daily we are bombarded with scientific studies in the media, but rarely is sufficient evidence provided to corroborate these claims. What is an individual to believe? How can we separate genuine breakthroughs from absurdities? Through deconstructing scientific research and examining provocative real-world examples, this course will examine a variety of issues influencing the nature of scientific inquiry and the culture of science, such as: demarcation of science from non-science, Hippocratic oath of science, abstract and practical limitations of human knowledge, science in the media, and the borderlines of science. Science enthusiasts and interested layman will come away with a holistic appreciation for the subjectivity of scientific inquiry, develop scientific literacy, and learn how to interpret science at its fringes.

Civic Engagement

Power, Privilege, and Perspectives: Examining Dynamics of Community Service in Los Angeles

Student Facilitator: Celeste Romano | Faculty Mentor: Kathy O'Byrne

Service is often presented as an eternally good activity, one that connects students to their communities, instills values of social responsibility, and produces individuals who are more tolerant and culturally aware. However, service can also reinforce systems of oppression and exploit marginalized groups for social benefit. Discussion with students involved with service work, with focus on social justice. Reflection on roles as volunteers and advocates and the privilege and power we are accorded as members of higher education. Underlying structure of community service, systematized inequities service work attempts to address, and how service work can perpetuate those inequities. Ways we can change current systems, including altering perspectives, challenging top down approaches, and redefining what it means to be an ally.
Communication Studies

**Celebrity and Fan Culture**

*Student Facilitator: Elisa Cottarelli  |  Faculty Mentor: Michael Suman*

Why did a lock of Justin Bieber's hair sell for $40,668 on eBay? What effect did Oprah have on boosting votes for Obama in 2007? Why are the young so engaged in pop culture? Did Liam Payne of One Direction's tweet really inspire Burger King to bring back "chicken fries" to their menu? This seminar will explore these, and many other, questions surrounding celebrity and fan culture. In the first half of the seminar, you will learn about the role of celebrities in our society, and in the second, you will learn about the role and characteristics of fan culture. This seminar will explore topics such as celebrity endorsements, reality television, politics, celebrity worship syndrome, fan creation, and the power and effect of the Internet on fan-celebrity relationships. This seminar will be divided into one-part lecture, one-part discussion per class. You should be able to reflect on the importance of celebrity and fan culture in your own lives and in today's media. Throughout the quarter, we will look at relevant theories and current events in the entertainment industry that pertain to celebrity and fan culture.

Computer Science

**Safety in the Cloud: Introduction to Cybersecurity**

*Student Facilitator: Frank Chen  |  Faculty Mentor: Peter L. Reiher*

Privacy has always been an important aspect of our lives, but fewer people understand how online privacy works. Our emails, electronic purchases, files, and sensitive information can be easily taken away from us if we are not educated in protecting ourselves online. Preliminary introduction to field of cybersecurity. Study of variety of topics important for regular consumers of technology. Background knowledge in programming or computer science not required.
**Education**

**Embracing Identity: Learn About Your Ancestry**

*Student Facilitator: Amy Aldana | Faculty Mentor: Sandra H. Graham*

Have you ever wondered who you are or how you got here? Exploration of these universal questions through learning about one's ancestral roots and family's heritage. Heritage, be it national, cultural, or family, is an endowment of unique sets of historical knowledge; but foremost, heritage is one's history. Learning about our family's history is essential to understanding ourselves, basic humanity, and diversity. Students construct their family tree using resources such as Ancestry.com and an oral history approach. Oral history workshop to provide students opportunity to obtain information through interviewing family members. Students gain better understanding of their identity through learning about their ancestral roots, and their family's heritage.

**English**

**Speak Write Now: Performance as Literary Analysis**

*Student Facilitator: Ashley Hope | Faculty Mentor: Eric Jager*

Roles of actor, director, author, reader, and spectator, using performance as critical lens for understanding literature. Return to the stage and revisiting of critical role of performance in understanding literature. Examination of how writers and performers stage meaning for different audiences and mediums. Consideration of questions, such as how performance is act of literary analysis and how performance creates meaning text alone cannot convey.
The Three Amigos: Introduction to Contemporary Mexican Cinema

Student Facilitator: Tyra Kristiansen | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huehls

Mexican directors have received the Academy Award for Best Directing for the past three years, Alfonso Cuarón in 2013 and Alejandro G. Iñárritu in 2014 and 2015. Three Mexican directors in particular have garnered transnational success: Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro G. Iñárritu, and Guillermo Del Toro. Study of prominent Spanish language films that have transformed Mexican cinema, Cuarón’s Y Tu Mamá También (2001), Iñárritu’s Amores Perros (2000), and Del Toro’s El Laberinto del Fauno (2006). Exploration of common themes across these films, such as transnationalism, machismo, Chicana archetypes, and racial identity formation in relation to contemporary Mexico, while distinguishing differences of narrative form and style.

Black Pleasure / Black Pain

Student Facilitator: Amara Lawson-Chavanu | Faculty Mentor: Uri McMillan

Debates within black feminist scholarship have been dedicated to issues of objectification, body commodification, and sexual agency. This discourse has largely centered on whether or not embodiments of perceived sexual excess contest or remain complicit in histories of rendering black women’s bodies as deviant. Complexities of black women’s intimate, erotic, and sexual lives, by looking beyond binary discourses of agency/oppression and pleasure/pain. How have black women historically negotiated sexual and non-sexual forms of pleasure under conditions or spaces of objectification, exploitation, or trauma? What are the politics of black women’s production and consumption of sexual labor? Selections from fields of black feminist pleasure politics, queer of color critique, black cultural studies, and black performance theory.
Complicity/Possibility: Recent Shifts in U.S. Fiction

Student Facilitator: Rachael Lee | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huehls

American culture is frequently imagined as doomed to a wasteland of meaningless consumption. This crisis has led recent U.S. fiction writers to explore alternative modes of meaning and value that might point us to better possibilities. Study of Tao Lin's Taipei (2013) with topical articles to explore ambiguous relationship between complicity and possibility in current literary modes. Topics include reconceptualizations of space and time, complications of human memory in digital era, consumerism and Millennial generation, cultures of depression, and value of experimental literature.

Through the Eyes of the Bystander: Breaking Perceptions of Oppression

Student Facilitator: Melanie Taing | Faculty Mentor: Christopher M. Mott

Should there be limits to scientific inquiry? What is the relationship between human rationality and human emotion? Examination of how Mary Shelley attempts to answer these questions in Frankenstein, how Hollywood does so, and how these questions relate to our world today.

Frankenstein, Monster or Maker: Unlocking the Inner Romantic

Student Facilitator: Tyra Kristiansen | Faculty Mentor: Mitchum A. Huehls

Mexican directors have received the Academy Award for Best Directing for the past three years, Alfonso Cuarón in 2013 and Alejandro G. Iñárritu in 2014 and 2015. Three Mexican directors in particular have garnered transnational success: Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro G. Iñárritu, and Guillermo Del Toro. Study of prominent Spanish language films that have transformed Mexican cinema, Cuarón's Y Tu Mamá También (2001), Iñárritu's Amores Perros (2000), and Del Toro's El Laberinto del Fauno (2006). Exploration of common themes across these films, such as transnationalism, machismo, Chicana archetypes, and racial identity formation in relation to contemporary Mexico, while distinguishing differences of narrative form and style.
There's a Catch: An Exploration of Satire Through Catch 22

*Student Facilitator: David Veta | Faculty Mentor: Christopher M. Mott*

Exploration of satire in contemporary English literature through lens of Joseph Heller's World War II novel, Catch 22. Students read and comment on absurd and satirical elements and discuss elements found particularly funny and interesting. Discussion of contemporary relevance of themes explored by Heller (e.g., insanity, bureaucracy, capitalism, morbidity).

**Gender Studies**

**Playing God: American Transgender Healthcare Experiences from 1950 to Present**

*Student Facilitator: Elias Lawliet | Faculty Mentor: Michelle F. Erai*

Exploration of often tumultuous relationships between transgender Americans and their healthcare providers over past sixty years. Nuanced understanding of transgender medical experience, from gender clinics that proliferated at universities nationwide (including UCLA) to current discussions about medical autonomy and insurance coverage. Recent research into experiences transgender Angelenos are having with their healthcare providers to see how far we’ve come--and how far we have yet to go.

**Management**

**Mad Over Marketing: Why We Buy What We Buy**

*Student Facilitator: Shashvat Somany | Faculty Mentor: Dominique M. Hanssens*

Study of world of marketing with holistic approach, combining creative, strategic, and psychological elements of marketing. Examination of different marketing campaigns across variety of brands and media channels such as TV, social media, print, out-of-home, Guerilla, etc.

**Mathematics**

**Math in Everyday Language: A Hands-On Exploration**

*Student Facilitators: Anahita Sarvi | Faculty Mentor: Michael A. Hill*

Have you ever felt intimidated by what seems to be an impenetrable jumble of mathematical symbols? In contrast, have you ever found mathematics to be much more palpable and vibrant than a quick glance at a typical textbook may suggest? Exploration of fundamental concepts
from mathematics in tangible, interactive manner. Use of variety of activities and media (games, clay, music, etc.) to study topics in linear algebra, differential equations, single and multi-variable calculus, and Fourier analysis. Students with any level of familiarity with the field may gain new insight and develop intuitive understanding of mathematics. No previous knowledge of mathematics is required.

**Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics**

**Viruses: Harmful Agents with Medicinal Applications**

*Student Facilitators: Louis Massoud, Zaid Hikmat | Faculty Mentor: Asim Dasgupta*

Exploration of use of viruses as tools in medical research, including discussion of their adoption as therapeutic agents. Introduction to basic processes exhibited by selected viruses, to understand therapeutic potentials of viruses as delivery systems in gene therapy. Interaction with distinguished virologist, who is an active researcher and professor at UCLA.

**Music**

**From Fingerpickers to Metalheads: How Guitar Took Over World**

*Student Facilitator: Juan Rivera | Faculty Mentor: Peter F. Yates*

How guitar has become most popular instrument in world, with focus on examining characteristics of selected popular guitar styles. What makes guitar appealing and versatile, similarities between styles, and how to distinguish them. Development of guitar within styles such as flamenco, reggae, rock, blues, and heavy metal. Social, economic, and political role guitar plays in style's culture. Guitar construction. Role of gender in guitar playing, including important contributions by women guitarists. Live demonstrations. No previous guitar or musical experience is required.

**Music History**

**Modern Conversations in Hip-Hop: Important Motifs and Relevant Cities**

*Student Facilitator: Amir Adam Dailamy | Faculty Mentor: Robert R. Fink*

Opinions and sounds of hip-hop can arguably serve as metaphorical pulse-check of current state of America. Structured discussion of some pertinent conversations in hip-hop in order to define current zeitgeist of hip-hop in America, and what it implies for trends in future generations of music.
Philosophy

Terrorism, State, and Justification

Student Facilitator: Chad Serrao | Faculty Mentor: Alexander J. Julius

The subject of terrorism is highly prevalent in contemporary American discourse. Politicians and news pundits discuss acts of terrorism, its origins, and its consequences. However, it is rare to ask what terrorism is. How does terrorism differ from warfare? How does terrorism differ from homicide? Use of philosophical and historical material on terrorism to attempt to answer these two questions.

Political Science

We, the Corporations

Student Facilitator: Austin Barraza | Faculty Mentor: Steven P. Bilakovics

Corporations today are able to exercise unmatched influence over government. Debate on corporate power over politics by examining how corporations influence government in order to produce policies that protect their economic interests. Comparisons drawn between different eras of American history to understand the relationship between big business and government. Overview of constitutional provisions and lobbying and possible approaches to reigning in corporate power.

Psychology

Criminal Justice: History, Neuroscience, and Psychology behind Major Controversies

Student Facilitator: Anna Zervos | Faculty Mentor: Theodore F. Robles

The U.S. criminal justice system has been and continues to be a source of major debate: from use of death penalty, to solitary confinement, to bail system. Deconstruction of these debates using historical, neuroscience, and psychological lens. Critical analysis of cyclic criminal justice system, starting with arrest of individual and ending with release.
Society and Genetics

Dolphins: People of the Sea

Student Facilitator: Kayla Arjasbi | Faculty Mentor: Jessica W. Lynch Alfaro

Dolphins are known to be smiley and playful animals, capable of responding to human commands and performing complex acrobatics. They are also one of the most intelligent nonhuman species to ever exist. Some may even argue that they are smarter than humans. Why is this? What makes them so smart? How do they communicate? Do they have culture? What makes them like us? Investigation of rich, complex lives of dolphins and discovery of meaningful, putatively human aspects we both share: social-emotional relationships, elaborate language and dialects, and remarkable problem-solving behavior. Discussion of issues in captivity and conservation, and exploration of ways to create positive change for our sea-people counterparts, through habitat restoration, sustainable fishing, and environment sustainability.

Statistics

Shaping the Future: Machine Learning and Data Science

Student Facilitator: Connor Hennen | Faculty Mentor: Vivian Lew

Exploration of how rapidly emerging field of data science will fundamentally revolutionize mechanisms and strategies through which wide array of industries operate. Examination of how big data can impact campaign strategies of politicians, diagnose and treat disease, determine tactics of sports franchises, drive business strategy, and help develop automated technologies and machines. Introduction to means by which data science is conducted, such as Python programming language, statistical techniques, and algorithms. Consideration of compelling prospect of data science field, machine learning, which enables computers to learn and develop independent of human input.