

UNDERGRADUATE SEMINARS AND SPECIAL TOPICS

In addition to lecture courses, undergraduates have the opportunity to take seminar-style courses focusing on the literature of a certain historical era or issue and exploring specific topics by researching and writing major papers based on primary sources or close readings of secondary works. Recent examples of those classes include:

China Today

Dr. Daniel Meissner

China today: A dynamic nation on firm foundation, or a disaster waiting to happen? A people submissive to communism, or pushing toward democracy? An economic success story, or a potential environmental catastrophe? A threat to American world dominance, or potential ally in the pursuit of global peace and cooperation? This course examines major issues and dominant trends in China today that bear directly on the political, social and economic development of the nation. Through a variety of readings and films, we will seek insight into contemporary China, the aspirations of its people, and their possible impact on the world of tomorrow.

Japan and the West

Dr. Michael Wert

Japan and the West is a research seminar that explores the interaction between Japan and the West from the sixteenth century to the present day. The goal of this class is for students to broaden their understanding of Japan in the context of global history. Topics include (but are not limited to) the following: Jesuits in Japan, Western trade in early modern Japan, the question of an isolated Japan, diplomacy between Japan and the Western nations in the nineteenth century, foreign workers during Japan's modernization, Japan in the world wars, and the postwar American occupation. Students will prepare and present a significant research project based on secondary and primary sources.

Twentieth Century Genocides

Dr. Irene Guenther

This "Special Topics in History" course will explore the concepts, roots, causes, goals, and consequences of genocide in the twentieth century. Within this broad framework, sub-topics include the debates surrounding comparative research on genocides, the twentieth century's cult of "normative violence," the struggle for an acceptable and accepted definition of genocide, and the legal entities established to hear and rule on cases of genocide and crimes against humanity. Cases of genocide examined in this seminar include the Armenian genocide and the subsequent ethnic transfers that occurred, the Holocaust and its mosaic of victims, the Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union, the Rwandan genocide and its roots in the shattering aftermath of European imperialism, the Cambodian genocide, and the "ethnic cleansings" that accompanied the recent wars in the former Yugoslavia. In order to facilitate a thorough understanding of the subject matter, introductory discussions will focus on influential intellectual, cultural, and political developments of the previous two centuries, as well as those of the twentieth century. These include philosophies born during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the rise of nationalism, industrialization and its socio-economic consequences, the second wave of European imperialism and accompanying colonial policies, scientifically-framed racism and its

political uses, creation of the “negative other,” social Darwinist theory, eugenics, the Great War’s cult of violence, the growth of the state, the concept and policy of “total war,” and the twentieth-century state policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing. We will conclude the course with an examination of U.S. policy regarding the U.N. convention on genocide, America's response (or non-response) to occurrences of genocide, rape and other crimes of war/crimes against humanity, and state violence in the twentieth century.

The Age of the Samurai

Dr. Michael Wert

In this lecture course we will take an intensive look at the culture, society, politics and economy of Japan during the age when samurai ruled Japan (roughly 12-19th centuries). Topics include (but are not limited to): the rise of the samurai, interaction with the continent, gender in premodern Japan, art and literature, the role of commoners/court/marginal people, and the collapse of the shogun's government. Students will be expected to write two, five-page papers, take two essay exams, attend classes, and complete all readings.

“Golden” 20s? Interwar Europe

Dr. Irene Guenther

"The world between the wars was attracted to madness," wrote the British philosopher Bertrand Russell. One of his contemporaries described interwar Europe as “dancing on the edge of a volcano.” Alternate descriptions of this period, which has as its bookends two world wars, include “the Age of Anxiety,” “the Age of the Lost Generation,” and “the Golden Years.” Europe in the era following the Great War was the site of remarkable cultural achievement, heightened mass consumption, contentious debate about the “New Woman,” political and economic turbulence, and the stage on which fascism and Nazism made their indelible appearance. This class will examine interwar Europe using a comparative framework. Doing so allows us to cast our net more widely than if we focus on only one or two nation-states. At the same time, a comparative analysis prompts us to discover the numerous interconnections, intersections, and differences that emerge between the nations of Europe. In the years between the two world wars, Europeans confronted issues that are still potent and relevant today. As a time characterized by great political, cultural, and social innovation, as well as by the great anxieties these developments triggered, the interwar era offers rich opportunities for exploring the fragility of democracy, the lasting wounds of war, the politicization of the media, the power of the arts, and the often heated relationship between politics, economics, culture, and the public.

Africa and the West

Dr. Chima Korieh

Focusing on Sub-Sahara Africa, this course explores Africa’s encounter with Europe from the mid-15th century to the end of colonialism. We will examine the socio-economic imperatives of European explorations of the African coast from the fifteenth century and the forms of exchange that occurred. The seminar will then examine the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade and the impact on African societies. We will also explore the post-abolition transitions in the political economy of African societies and analyze the conditions that led to emergence of imperialism and the colonization of Africa. We will explore the motives and impacts of these encounters on African societies through the lenses of political economy, race and gender. This

research seminar will include readings of primary and secondary sources, active participation in weekly discussions, a research project and class presentation.

Legacies: The Civil War Era

Dr. James Marten

Legacies: The Civil War Era is a research seminar in which students will write a 20-25 pp. paper based on primary sources on an issue related to the memory, commemoration, and legacies of the Civil War Era in American life. Among the possible issues are lives of and attitudes toward Civil War veterans; the aftermath of slavery; race in the United States as reflected in the prism of ideas about the Civil War; celebrations of notable events and reunions of participants; and the ways in which politicians and others have used the memory of the Civil War to promote specific interpretations and political campaigns. Final grades will be based on the paper, class participation, and a few small preliminary assignments during the first three or four weeks of the course.

Everyday Life in the Midwest

Dr. Thomas Jablonsky

An intensive reading/discussion class that will focus upon the ordinary life patterns of both rural and urban Midwesterners between the early nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. We will examine case studies that touch upon issues such as the environment, family life, gender roles, schooling, work habits, and recreation. Students will conclude the semester with an in-depth analysis of the social history processes that we have examined.

Immigrants in America

Dr. Alison Efford

Immigration is one of the defining themes of American history. In this colloquium, students will read extensively on immigrants in North American history, from the colonial period to the modern United States. We will discuss topics such as adapting to American life, anti-immigrant sentiment, women's experiences as immigrants, and immigrants and popular culture. Two themes will be especially important: the role of immigrants as workers and their complicated relationship to native-born African Americans. Students will read five historical monographs, one novel, one autobiography, and about six additional articles and chapters. Assessments will include class participation, reading responses, a short paper, and a longer term paper.

History of Byzantine Empire

Dr. Phillip Naylor

The significance of the Byzantine Empire is often understated in Western Civilization textbooks. It officially began with the founding of Constantinople in 330 and ended with the fall of that city to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Thus, we will study together a millennium of fascinating history that bridged from late antiquity to early modernity. Given its location—the empire straddled Europe, Asia, and Africa—we will have ample opportunities to apply “transcultural history,” the history that deals with encounters and interactions between and among civilizations and societies. Students will discover an array of emperors and empresses who sustained Greco-Roman Civilization in the East while Western Europe experienced its

formative German-Roman fusion. The relationship with Islam will receive particular attention too. Classes will feature a lecture-discussion format. Students should expect subjective and objective components to exams and a research paper. Since our library holds exceptional resources, including all the Dumbarton Oaks Papers, research papers will permit deeper considerations of Byzantine economics, politics, society, culture, and religion (Eastern Orthodoxy) as well as relations with Muslim and Western and Eastern European states. Assigned readings will include primary document narratives from distinguished Byzantines.

Music and History in the West

Rev. Michael Zeps, S.J.

This undergraduate seminar will combine history, philosophy, science and music appreciation. It will start with the beginnings of mathematical analysis of western music in Pythagoras and the Greeks. Coming up through philosophers and theologians and the medieval world view with Gregorian Chant and the medieval world view of music, it will then deal with the mystical “music of the spheres” found in scientists like Kepler and Newton as well as with “music of the world” like Renaissance polyphony and Baroque music. It will then deal with the giants of classicism and romanticism. Nationalism in music was followed by atonal and serial music in the 20th century although older forms survived. There will be other considerations as well, such as aesthetics, acoustics, architecture, and art related to music through the ages. The two hour weekly class will be divided tentatively into a lecture on some relevant topic, examples of music, and late in the semester a presentation of research findings with discussion led by a student. A major research paper will be the result of each student’s efforts. Grading will be: class participation 25%, final exam 25%, presentation and research paper 50%.

Medieval East Asia

Dr. Daniel Meissner

Reviled by westerners as godless butchers and barbaric pillagers, Mongolian horsemen swept down from the northern steppe in the thirteenth century to conquer all of east and central Asia. Their tremendous empire linked the Pacific with the Mediterranean, initiating a dynamic period of cultural exchange between the east and west. The Mongolian peace encouraged trade and travel, which produced a vibrant record of this era in the epic tales of such explorers as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. These accounts portrayed a far more positive image of the Mongols than mere butchers and pillagers. Drawing upon such primary sources, this course will reexamine east and central Asian history on the eve of the Mongol invasion, trace the route of Mongol conquests, and explore the historical significance of the Mongolian empire on the medieval age.

The Other Middle Ages: Persecution in Medieval Europe

Dr. Lezlie Knox

Historian R.I. Moore has argued that the High Middle Ages in Europe should be characterized as a “persecuting society” in which both secular monarchs and prelates began a process that defined Jews, heretics, and lepers as marginal communities, which were then oppressed, exiled, and even exterminated. Furthermore, he claimed that this phenomenon represented the origin of modern atrocities ranging from the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Holocaust. Not surprisingly, medievalists and other historians have been quick to take up the challenge presented by his work. There now exists a rich body of

historical literature that both challenges and supports Moore's thesis—a debate to which this colloquium will contribute.

Primary and secondary source readings will explore the complicated ways in which medieval Europe constructed both a sense of a central identity (e.g. Latin Christendom, national monarchies) as well as categories of the “Other,” outsiders who were vulnerable to persecution (not only Jews, heretics and lepers, but also prostitutes, witches, mystics, homosexuals, etc). Class meetings will focus on the analysis of primary sources and secondary works, as well as on discussions of individual research projects. No previous study of medieval society is required.

Religion in Latin America

Dr. Laura Matthew

Religion and Society in Latin America is a lecture/discussion course that covers the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries. We will examine, among other things, the Native American, African, and European traditions that have influenced religious practice in Latin America; the institutional and cultural power of the Catholic church; liberation theology during the Cold War; and the rise of Latin American Protestantism in the twentieth century. Students will be graded according to their performance in weekly electronic and classroom discussions, a midterm, and a final exam.

The Conquest of Mexico

Dr. Laura Matthew

This course examines the epic history of the conquest of Mexico in 1521 from various temporal, political, and theoretical points of view. We will address the conquest as both event (what really happened?) and myth (what does it symbolize?). Some of the themes we will discuss are: romantic and patriotic interpretations of the conquest; the notion of “Western” preeminence in the modern world; the impact of colonialism on native peoples; and how historians know what they say they do. The course is based primarily on common readings and discussion of primary and secondary sources.

The Cold War in Latin America

Dr. Michael Donoghue

This course examines the impact of the capitalist/communist conflict in the Western Hemisphere that shaped so much of 20th century Latin American history. We will analyze the roots of Latin American fears toward leftist/socialist movements early in the 20th century and the purging of German citizens from Latin America during World War II as a precursor to the persecution of communists/socialists that would follow. The course will trace the growth of the post World War II Cold War through the creation of pro-U.S. defense pacts, the repression of popular labor movements, the CIA-backed coup in Guatemala, the Cuban Revolution, the Alliance for Progress, liberation theology, the School of the Americas, and the rise of both right-wing and left-wing military regimes sponsored by administrations from Truman to Reagan. Particular emphasis will be placed on popular Latin American responses that rejected the Cold War paradigm as a means for resolving socioeconomic problems. These topics will be discussed in the context of a nation or a region, depending on each week's focus. The course will be reading-intensive with a strong emphasis on discussion and individual contributions to our weekly meetings. Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of several short papers and one longer research project.

New England Witchcraft 1650-99

Dr. John Krugler

SMALL NEW ENGLAND HAMLET ENDURES TERRORIST ASSAULT. FEAR OF IMMINENT ATTACKS SPREADS TO SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES. Salem Village minister, the Reverend Samuel Parris noted in a recent sermon that his community is under attack from its dreaded and most feared enemy, the Devil. From Boston, the Reverend Cotton Mather reported that “the Devil is stalking New England.”

So might modern media have heralded the witchcraft crisis in Essex County, Massachusetts in 1692. HIST 197 is a READING/discussion course that examines the half-century long struggle in New England against the Devil and his minions—witches. Each two-hour class will investigate and discuss various topics associated with the assigned readings (in both primary documents and interpretative accounts), short assignments, and topics such as hysteria (fear) and disease (ergot poisoning) introduced by lectures. Other topics investigated include the relation of witchcraft to religion, the role of the Puritan clergy in the witchcraft episode, the family and its relationship to witchcraft, social tensions within the New England community, and the nature and significance of the witchcraft trials, including community remorse. And finally, because the history of witchcraft is the history of women, the role of women in Puritan society receives special attention. Assessment of student performance will be based on the quality of work as demonstrated in two writing assignments and by participation in class activities.

All seniors in the college of Arts and Sciences are required to take a senior experience course; most choose a course offered by their major department. Over the past several years, the following courses have been offered by the history department in a reading intensive, seminar-style format to meet the Senior Experience requirement:

The Black Death

Dr. Lezlie Knox

The Black Death killed between one-third and one-half of Europe's population between 1348-1351. Not surprisingly, this revolutionary event left an impact on medieval literature, religion, arts, politics, economy, and society like few other events. This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to examining the phenomenon of the Black Death. Our starting point will be medieval accounts of the epidemic: its causes, immediate impact, and long-term consequences. We will read traditional historical documents and literary texts, but also will incorporate material culture and cutting-edge science, including DNA research. Student requirements will include active participation in weekly discussions, short reaction papers or presentations, and a research project.

Invasions of the Americas

Dr. John Krugler & Dr. Laura Matthew

Our Eurocentric history presents the history of the Americas from the perspective of the invaders, most notably, the Spanish and the English. Can these perspectives be reversed? This course challenges history majors to rethink their understanding of the past. HIST 896 will explore this question by looking first at the status of Native American cultures at contact. It will consider, *inter alia*, the Spanish and English invasions, how native populations dealt with the

threats to their cultural integrity, the enticements offered by European weapons and trade goods, and the long-term impact of successive European invasions on native populations and the environment. Geographically the course will traverse from the first contacts in the West Indies, to Mesoamerica, to Virginia and the North American Southeast, as the clash of cultures played out from 1492 into the 18th century. Important topics include the Origins Question (where and when did the first Americans enter the continent?); the Columbian Exchange and demographic collapse of American populations (how many were here, how many died?); the Black Legend (were the Spanish worse than the English?); war and diplomacy (and lying and deceit); notions of race and racism; runaways and captives; communication barriers and cultural mediators (who were the interpreters?); cultural accommodations; how each perceived the “other” (and the nasty names they called each other); and the role of perspective and myth in historical interpretation.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland

Dr. Timothy G. McMahon

History 896 will look at the Troubles in Northern Ireland from multiple angles, seeking to understand not merely specific events that occurred but also the ways in which those events were turned to political advantage by various actors. Among the themes we will seek to address are the use of terror to achieve political ends by both governmental and non-governmental groups; the internationalization of the Northern Irish question; the formation and re-formation of political blocs; and the role of ordinary people in sustaining paramilitaries **and** in seeking peaceful solutions across community boundaries. As such, we will hope to better understand both the chaotic experience of life in a divided, war torn land and how people have sought to bring order out of that chaos.

Revolutions: The 1960s

Dr. Julius Ruff

In many ways the world has not been the same since the decade of the 1960s. These were years marked by constant challenge to long-standing norms of society, politics, and even traditional morality that produced revolutionary changes that continue to affect our world. Our focus in the course will be global, and we will examine issues of race (the civil rights movement in the United States; the liberation of much of Africa and Asia from white, European colonial rule), gender (the movement for women’s full economic and social equality with males; challenges to traditional moral strictures), and politics (the enduring fissure opened in America by the Vietnam War; the events of 1968 in Europe which challenged both liberal democracy in France and Communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia). Class meetings will be devoted to lecture and discussion of these and other issues. The course grade will be based on a midterm (30%), a final (30%), a paper (30%), and class participation (10%).

Revolution in China

Dr. Daniel Meissner

Revolution in China will explore both the history and historiography of China’s recent, turbulent development. In its search for sovereignty, wealth and power in a modern world, China has negotiated a chaotic course through monarchy and free markets, republicanism and bureaucratic capitalism, communism and planned economy, and now socialism with “Chinese characteristics.” Constant upheaval over the last century has ravaged nearly every aspect of the nation's political, social and economic systems, and forged entirely new structures. Through a

number of historical and literary texts, this course will explore the varied forces which have shaped those structures and directed the nation's modern revolutionary history. In addition, it will examine the processes through which governments, citizens and historians attempt to establish order out of chaos.