The Literary, Visual, and Material Culture Initiative presents a cross-disciplinary, team-taught graduate seminar:

**Picturing Paradise:**
**Western Images of Utopia and Real Shangri-La’s**
MDA 599, Spring 2006
Thursdays, 1:00 to 3:50 pm

LVMC promotes interdisciplinary exchange and curricular innovation among USC faculty and graduate students engaged in the study of literary, visual, and material culture. Housed in the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences but reaching across the schools and resources of the University, LVMC sponsors team-taught graduate seminars, a faculty works-in-progress series, panel discussions, reading groups, and visiting lectures. Rather than focusing on traditional forms of art or literature, LVMC considers the overlaps among texts, images, and objects and the alternative modes of interpretation they demand.

Jane Iwamura, American Studies and Religion
and
Nancy Lutkehaus, Anthropology and Gender Studies

This seminar addresses the representation of places, landscapes, and people associated with Western ideas about paradise on earth, as well as notions of utopian worlds and mystical Shangri-las. Since the age of discovery the Western world has constructed images of real paradises and Shangri-las based on the exploration of remote and exotic locations. With the advent of Western exploration and charting of places remote from the metropolitan centers of Europe, ethnographic descriptions of real people and places began to influence the texts, paintings, drawings and other visual creations of European writers and artists. These visions also affected the way in which indigenous populations pictured and presented themselves, forming a dialectic of seeing. This seminar will also consider the darker sides of paradise: the counter discourses and associated images of dystopia, of Savage Barbarians, and of the political violence that has been the social reality of places that otherwise loom large in the Western imaginary as emblematic of paradise. The intersection between the imagined and real allows us rich opportunity to explore and discuss a wide range of visual and critical methodologies.

For more information email lvmc@usc.edu or go to http://www.usc.edu/lvmc