GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry

Courses that meet this requirement cultivate a critical appreciation for various forms of human expression by teaching students to evaluate works of literature, philosophy, and the arts, to think critically and formulate informed opinions about ideas and values.

AHIS 100g, Introduction of Visual Culture

This course description has been provided by Professor Vanessa Schwartz.

Living in the modern world, we are adept at reading an array of visual imagery: advertisements, billboards, television, videos, films, art, and museum exhibitions. Because we are partially determined by the visual representations we produce and consume, these images inform our individual and collective identities. It would seem imperative, then, to not only look but also to learn to think critically about the images with which we are confronted everyday. This introductory course reckons with the complex visual world, using a range of examples. Our investigations will cross cultures, history, and media. Through careful looking at and reading of primary sources, and by writing, students will be encouraged to think broadly and deeply about what makes up their visual world and understand how it connects to the past.

AMST 301gp, America, the Frontier, and the New West

AMST 301gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations.

This course description has been provided by Professor John Rowe.

We will study what historians term “the New West,” by which they mean how the West has been shaped by many different historical forces and peoples. Reading “New West” scholars like Richard Slotkin, Reginald Horsman, Patricia Nelson Limerick, we will also read and view novels, plays, films, and visual art works that give us a solid understanding of how Native Americans, African Americans, Euroamericans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, women, and LBGTs have contributed to our lived realities in the West.

The course provides an introduction to one of the foundational approaches to American Studies. The “frontier” has long been considered one of the key ways in which Americans have defined their national identity, especially as the “frontier” has changed meanings (and places) in the development of the U.S. nation. “New West” historians have stressed how different communities have shaped and defined the “frontier” as well as the very concepts of the West and westward expansion. Studying the contributions of these different communities provides a basic introduction to U.S. ethnicities and immigrant communities.

CLAS 151gp, Civilization of Rome

CLAS 151gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations.

This course description has been provided by Professor Thomas Habinek.

The goal of this course is to give students an understanding of the key aspects of classical Roman civilization that have had an impact on later periods of history up to the present. The course will consider interrelated issues of ethics, politics, social structure, and literary and artistic creativity in order to address the questions: why do the Romans matter? What do we still have to learn from them? The reading assignments will consist of full texts or lengthy selections from classical Roman writers of prose and poetry, supplemented by extensive visual material presented in class and archived on Blackboard. Lectures will
provide context for understanding the readings and will introduce students to later uses of the material in question. A midterm and final exam will test the student’s knowledge of key concepts. A term paper will allow each student to explore some aspect of the legacy of Rome in a later culture or period of history, depending on individual interests.

CLAS 320gmp, Diversity and the Classical Western Tradition

This course description has been provided by Professor Daniel Richter.

This is a course about the history of the idea of difference. “Diversity” is a vague and ambiguous concept which we shall bring into focus by reading relevant texts written by authors in a variety of historical circumstances. What do we mean by the ‘varieties of difference’ and how do our criteria of difference overlap? What do we mean when we speak about ‘difference’ in terms of gender, biology, ethnicity, class, status, politics, nationality, intelligence, etc.? Are these categories absolute or socially constructed? Can thinking about these ideas in the context of the ancient Mediterranean help us to understand contemporary debates about the meaning of diversity and globalization? Finally, how does all this call into question the very idea of a "Western Tradition?"

COLT 101gp, Masterpieces and Masterminds: Literature and Thought

This course description has been provided by Professor Vicent Farenga.

This course offers a broad, conceptual introduction to masterpieces of Western culture from Greco-Roman antiquity to the modern age (1800 AD). It investigates works of literature, philosophy, religion, and history — and asks why these continue to arouse interest and controversy today. The course also satisfies major credit in the Literature Concentration of the Comparative Literature (COLT) major and minor as well as in the Global Cultures track of the COLT major and minor.

COLT 264gp, Asian Aesthetic and Literature Traditions

This course will examine the Asian aesthetic and literary heritage of fiction, short stories, painting, sculpture, literary themes of the supernatural, the uncanny, and the marvelous, trends and myths through the readings of visual texts and literary works. It is basically concerned with an interdisciplinary approach to art and literature in China and Japan which focuses on the intercultural relationship between the artist and his art. Additional subject studies will be the attitude of the artist towards the treatment of the supernatural, the grotesque in Asian literature and art, and the artist’s artistry in dealing with such motifs as the dream, heroic quest, love and death as well as heaven and hell.

Also included will be the expression of different visions of human life in art and literature — apocalyptic, grotesque, tragic and comic that were developed under the heavy influence of cultural and religious paradigms such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in China and Japan.

CORE 101g, Symbols and Conceptual Systems: Thematic Option Honors Program

This course is only for a specified cohort of students.
CORE 102gp, Culture and Values: Thematic Option Honors Program

This course is only for a specified cohort of students. CORE 102gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations.

This course description has been provided by Professor Edwin McCann.

What is it to be a human being? If we say, with Darwin, that humans are just one species of animal (Homo sapiens) with its own evolutionary and natural history, what is to become of dignity, virtue, heroism, freedom, and morality? (As Dostoevsky’s Ivan Karamazov says, ‘If God does not exist, everything is permitted.’) Or are we, unlike any of the other animals, made in God’s image, possessed of an immortal soul, and thus elevated above the whole of the natural order? What about monsters or the subhuman—what do they lack that we have? Are such notions as God, or the gods, or the human soul, outdated leftovers from a dead or dying worldview?

In this course we will study contrasts: what the nature of God or gods and the ways we relate ourselves to them says about our own nature and status as human mortals (here the concept of the hero is important as well), and what the nature of subhuman monsters (Frankenstein’s monster, the ‘monstrous vermin’ that Gregor Samsa became) and the way we relate to them tells us about ourselves. We will consider ways in which these questions are addressed in some important and influential works of philosophy and literature in the Western cultural tradition. We’ll also trace certain ancillary themes which run through many of these works: the notion of the city as an image or figure for civilization; the notion that human love can be an image or figure for a spiritual order; and the notion of evil as embodied in the figure of the devil. While we will seek to understand these works in their own context, we will also be concerned to explore the ways in which these works speak to our own situation, and the ways in which they fail to do so.

CTWR 100g, Story, Character, Conflict, and Catharsis

This course is only for a specified cohort of students. This course description has been provided by Professor Jack Epps.

Whether stories come to us in the form of ancient myths, epic poems, medieval fairy tales, plays, classic literature, mass-market fiction, TV shows, or feature films, they speak to our humanity, our fears, our hopes, and our dreams. Stories are a means for us to discover, explore, and pass on universal truths, as well as a way for us to learn about ourselves as individuals and in relation to others and to society. Stories tell us who we are, where we’ve been, and where we might go. They connect us to our culture and society, and offer an opportunity for deeper self-reflection about who we are and how we fit into the world around us.

This course examines how stories accomplish this connectivity, with a specific emphasis on analysis and creation. Both the analysis and the creativity training are geared toward technical facility. We will examine storytelling on both a macro level—cultural, social, political, and religious contexts—and on a micro level—personal and internal motivations, with the goal of applying what we’ve learned to our own work.

We will focus on the elements of character and story that have been used by storytellers in all cultures to create connectivity with audiences in their own time and through the generations that followed. The objective is to learn how these elements engage an audience and how we can use these elements to tell our own unique stories.

While Homer’s “The Iliad” and Ben Mezrich and Aaron Sorkin’s “The Social Network” arise from different cultures and epochs, both stories are about how much a man is willing to sacrifice for glory. Both stories examine this universal theme in the context of culture, society, and personal motivation. But though each story is unique—a different vision thematically, a different world, and different answers to the same universal questions about self and society—both use the same elements of character and story to create journeys that engage and move an audience.

These elements of character and story have been used for millennia and they form a universal storytelling language. We will learn this language by focusing on similarities rather than differences first, and then examine what makes a character and story unique. We will examine how connectivity arises from both these similarities and differences, thus developing our ability to analyze creative works.
The objective of this analysis is to learn how to create engaging characters and then put them on a journey worth following—a worthwhile story. We’ll learn how to develop characters and their corresponding stories and worlds. The primary focus will be on the elements required to create a living, breathing protagonist and the techniques required to tell his or her story. By learning these elements and techniques, we’ll better understand how to develop stories that are both unique and engaging.

To that end, we’ll focus on writing exercises specifically designed for screenwriters and storytellers. This will lay the foundation for writing a short screenplay, encompassing the lessons learned over the course of the semester.

**DANC 342g, International and Historical Perspectives on Dance**

_This course description has been provided by Professor Jackie Kopcsak._

For centuries dance-makers have been exploring one of life’s existential questions: what does it mean to be a creative, thinking, feeling person at this moment in history? Their findings are vital to a study of the humanities, not only in illuminating the chronological record with seminal works of the imagination, but also because the vessels of expression are none other than the human body and soul. This course will examine the continuum of dance as a Western theatre art from ancient times to present day, paying close attention to how dance is historicized and why certain movements have occurred throughout the course of dance history. The class is meant to challenge entry-level perceptions of dance by asking students to look more broadly at how the history of theatrical dance is not meant to be extracted and studied in isolation from international development. Students will also be encouraged to mine their own dance experiences, observation and reflection about dance as research tools germane to discourse. Varied in-class activities will allow students to cultivate ways to articulate, theorize and embody diverse dance practices. The course will also ask students to interact with dance history through an array of sources, including but not limited to theoretical texts, critical reviews, poems, programs, images, films, monographs and auto-biographies. This multidimensional approach to history is in line with the three-dimensionality inherent within dance as a discipline.

**EALC 110gp, East Asian Humanities: The Great Tradition**

_EALC 110gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations._

_This course description has been provided by Professor George Hayden._

This course will introduce the fundamental humanistic traditions of China, Korea, and Japan through representative works of traditional social philosophy, religion, poetry, historical writing, and esthetics. The readings are mostly from primary sources as translated into English. No previous knowledge of an East Asian culture or language is expected.

In this course you will:

1) Examine human ethics through different, sometimes mutually opposing, perspective: Confucian, Daoist, Legalist, and Buddhist,

2) Perceive the signs of cultural identity, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, surviving from ancient times to modern to assess their relevance and value,

3) Learn to identify poetic, biographical, and graphic imagery in relation to traditional philosophical concepts.

**EALC 130gp, Introduction to East Asian Ethical Thought**

_EALC 130gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations._

_This course description has been provided by Professor Bettine Birge._

This course examines different ethical systems that have operated in East Asia in traditional and modern times. Readings are mostly from primary sources and address different ethical, political, philosophical, and religious options of China and Japan.
Students are asked to read each text critically and to evaluate each system for its efficacy in its historical and cultural setting and for its applicability in today's world.

Comparisons to western thought are encouraged as is discussion of contemporary ethical issues and students' own values and approaches to life. The course will include a multi-media project done in groups.

There will also be an optional Service Learning component through JEP (Joint Education Project, www.usc.edu/jep), in which students will be able to experience and reflect on East Asian ethics through the practice of community service. This course can apply towards GE credit for the GE-B (Humanistic Inquiry) category and can be counted towards department requirements for majors and minors in East Asian Languages and Cultures. This course meets the requirements for an ethics course as established by the State of California for a license to practice in the profession of accounting.

**EALC 150g, Global Chinese Cinema and Cultural Studies**

*This course description has been provided by Professor Brian Bernards.*

This course examines Chinese-language cinemas through the transnational production and circulation of three genres with a rich cultural genealogy: the musical, the martial arts film, and the family melodrama. The evolution of these genres is intricately tied to the global visions and cross-cultural dialogues that have defined Chinese cinema since its origins. Focusing on the emergence of these genres from five distinct centers of Chinese cinematic production – Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Beijing, and Singapore – this course examines how filmmakers reassess and rearticulate Chinese culture in a global context. Our examination of these films emphasizes how Chinese culture and generic conventions can be visually repackaged, marketed, and consumed at three different levels of production, circulation, and reception: 1) Pan-Chinese, 2) Pan-Asian, and 3) Pan-Pacific. Additionally, we analyze how these films reinforce or challenge a unified vision of Chinese culture by addressing political concerns and social issues unique to their local, historical context and by incorporating various Chinese languages, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Hokkien. Our analysis will aim to uncover the various political and economic motivations behind transnational production as well as the possibilities for cross-cultural resonances, discrepancies, translations, and misinterpretations. All films are subtitled in English. No knowledge of Chinese languages or history is presumed or required.

**EALC 342g, Japanese Literature and Culture**

*This course description has been provided by Professor David Bialack.*

The object of this course is to explore fundamental patterns in the literature and culture of Japan through an examination of key literary, historical, religious, and philosophical texts from the ancient through modern periods. The emphasis will be equally on the literature as literature, with close attention to its historical and cultural moment, and on how these same texts and cultural artifacts resonate in the contemporary world of a globalized Japan. Topics discussed in the course will include the role of myth, story-telling, and historical narrative in Japanese culture; conceptions of authority as reflected in evolving notions of imperial, sacred, and secular power; the role of the ritual and performance in Japanese literature and art, with specific comparisons to non-Japanese theatrical traditions; notions of gender, nationality, and class; the role of aesthetics and beauty in Japanese culture; and concepts of self, non-self, and otherness, with comparisons to China and other East Asian traditions as well as Western notions of individuality and self. Another thread in the course will look at the role of nature and seasonality in Japanese literature and culture and how these traditional motifs are complicated by contemporary environmental concerns. The course may also include screenings of several films that require attendance outside normal class time.
EALC 344g, Korean Culture from Ancient to Modern Times

This course description has been provided by Professor Sunyoung Park.

This course explores fundamental patterns of Korean literature, arts, and culture from the ancient times to the modern era. Our readings will combine some of the finest masterpieces in the Korean literary tradition — from ancient myths and medieval love songs to modern and contemporary novels and poems — with core historical documents such as royal edicts, political memorials, and manifestoes of peasant revolutions. The readings will be accompanied by the slide presentation of artworks and the screening of films. We will approach each cultural work at once as a writer’s intellectual and artistic testimony and as a window into the culture and sensibilities of its time. This class will combine lecture with discussion, and students will be strongly encouraged to participate. The course also satisfies the requirement for majors and minors in East Asian languages and cultures. All the works will be read in English translation, and no knowledge of the Korean language is required.

ENGL 172g, The Art of Poetry

ENGL 172g duplicates credit in ARLT 101g.

This course description has been provided by Professor Dana Gioia.

This course provides an introduction to the pleasures and insights of poetry. Our coursework will be divided into two parts. In the first half, we will systematically explore the key elements of the poetic art (voice, image, suggestion, metaphor, and form) with examples drawn from the high points of English-language poetry. After this careful introduction, the second part of the course will explore the lives and works of ten major poets in depth (Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, E. A. Robinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, Robinson Jeffers, Elizabeth Bishop, and Langston Hughes).

This course will develop your skill in critical reading and writing—focusing on both what literary language says explicitly and what it suggests. As you will discover, the careful study of poetry will enhance your general mastery of language.

Underlying all of these academic aims, however, is the assumption that poetry is not a remote and specialized art whose mysteries can be appreciated only by a trained intellectual elite. This course rests on the conviction that poetry is one of the irreplaceable human arts whose power and pleasure are open to any alert and intelligent person with an inclination to savor them.

ENGL 176g, Los Angeles: the City, the Novel, the Movie

ENGL 176g duplicates credit in ARLT 101g.

This course description has been provided by Professor Thomas Gustafson.

Los Angeles has been mocked as a city 500 miles wide and two inches deep. It is famous for its movies and music, but critics claim that it lacks cultural depth. This course seeks to prove otherwise. The region of Southern California has a remarkably rich literary heritage extending deep into its past, and over the past two decades, Los Angeles has become a pre-eminent center of literary creativity in the United States, the home of a new generation of writers whose work address questions and concerns of special significance as we confront the problems of 21st century urban America including ethnic friction, environmental crises, social inequality, and problems associated with uprootedness and materialism. Study of the literature of this region can help perform one of the vital roles of education in a democracy and in this urban region famous for its fragmentation and the powerful allure of the image: It can teach us to listen more carefully to the rich mix of voices that compose the vox populi of Los Angeles, and thus it can help create a deeper, broader sense of our common ground.

So often LA is represented in our movies and our music as a place of superficial, drive-by people: on our freeways, we pass each other by, silently, wordlessly, insulated in our cars, or we are stuck in the same jam, our mobility a dream, or we crash into each other, carelessly or in rage. Our cars and the freeways, once the means for connecting us more quickly to each other are now our source of congestion, pollution, gridlock. The literature of Los Angeles at its best gets us out of these jams and off our freeways and away from tourist sites and beyond the Westside and underneath the surface. It lets us know that
Los Angeles is more than the pathologies represented by its trademark crime fiction, and it offers us a street-wise sense of our neighborhoods, a slow and careful means to study our cultural geography. It gives us a special topography that includes not just the clichéd high and lows—the Beverly Hills of 90210 and the South Los Angeles of “Menace II Society.” It is also a literature that can dig at us, making us more aware of our own foundations, our own connections to our common ground and the labor and politics and dispossessions and entrepreneurship that have transformed it from El Pueblo de la Nuestra Senora Reina de Los Angeles to an L.A. crowned as the entertainment capital of the world and the capital of the Pacific Rim.

Los Angeles is a place dominated by in our imaginations by the look, the eye, the gaze of the camera, the representations of our visual culture. F. Scott Fitzgerald, when he lived and worked in Hollywood in the 1930s, expressed fear and loathing that the novel was being supplanted by the film as the pre-eminent medium of American art. But this fear that Los Angeles would be the death of the creative word is just another false apocalyptic scenario for this city that so embraces apocalypse. It has long been the home of remarkably creative words, a place where Shakespeare, Austen and Bible stories and the classics of Western culture have been continually resurrected and reconfigured to tell parables for a new day and age, and where new classics (an oxymoron befitting Los Angeles) have been created by its writers who have found a home and voice here. And we will see how and why writers in this city have reinvoked Biblical parables and lessons from the classics (such as those taught by Socrates in The Republic) to pronounce about the soul of LA or prophesy its fate or render a new sermon ... or who have tried to save us from the cave of delusion so our gaze will not settle on shadows on the wall but be redirected inside ourselves and out into the streets.

Los Angeles has its genesis in exodus: People looking for opportunity, a new start, a new Eden, a garden world, a Promised land, moved here from elsewhere. But here is where we all ran into each other in acts of friction and fusion. We will focus on the past, present and future of such collisions and mergers. And we will wonder: What does Los Angeles literature ask of us now: Can we all get along? Can we learn how to merge rather than crash? Can we overcome the perils of Babel? Can we cure a willful amnesia about our past? At the end of the course, you tell me.

HIST 100gm, The American Experience

This course description has been provided by Professor William Deverell.

Our semester together will involve a sprint through all of American history. We will examine the last four hundred years or more of North American and United States history. The course will pay particular attention to social, cultural, and political history, but we will also examine such themes as environmental and economic history. History 100gm is also designed to pay particular attention to the remarkable racial and ethnic diversity of the American experience. As we work to satisfy the intellectual and methodological requirements of this GE category, we hope you will gain a useful perspective on the nation’s past – a central feature of any solid liberal arts education.

HIST 102gm, Medieval People: Early Europe and Its Neighbors, 400-1500

This course description has been provided by Professor J. Glenn.

There is a great diversity among the peoples who shaped the social, political, religious, and intellectual landscapes of European lands from the fourth through the fourteenth century. In this course, we shall study them. In particular, we shall explore the works of a number of individuals from four (distinct?) periods in the hope that, by getting to know them (both the works and their authors), we can learn about the various groups to which they belonged and the cultures from which they come. In other words, our rigorous study of primary sources of various genres — narrative histories, biographies, laws, theological treatises, philosophical tracts, poems, letters, literature, art, architecture, and the material remains of the period — will enable us to glimpse at least some of the norms and institutions of the different peoples who populated Europe (and some of their neighbors) during the period generally known as the Middle Ages. We shall attempt to determine what some of these norms and institutions were and their similarities and/or differences across time and place as we visit the Late Antique World of the fourth century, the Barbarian West of the sixth, the Age of Cathedrals and Chivalry in twelfth-century
northern France, and Late Medieval Italy (thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries). What do these cultures share? our authors? their works? How are they alike? And how do they differ? From the sources, students are encouraged — indeed, really required — to develop their own answers to these questions over the course of the semester. Lectures will, at times, supplement our readings, but much of our class time will be devoted to discussion of the sources as we analyze what they can (and cannot) tell us about their authors and creators, about the cultures in which they lived, and about the pasts (real or imagined) out of which their cultures and Europe grew.

HIST 103g, The Emergence of Modern Europe

This course description has been provided by Professor Lindsay O'Neill.

Between 1350 and 1800 there lived many individuals whose names remain familiar to us today: Michelangelo, Gutenberg, Christopher Columbus, Martin Luther, Napoleon. However, where their importance lies and how they fit into the larger picture of the period is less well known and this class seeks to explore, among other things, who made Michelangelo’s art possible, why Columbus sailed the ocean blue, why the printing press was important and who besides Martin Luther participated in the Reformation. These individuals, the events they lived through, and the ideas they pondered helped shape the world that we live in today. They faced massive religious change, new forms of knowledge, changing forms of governance, a geographical reorientation and all the upheaval put in motion by these alterations. This class traces the causes and consequences of these changes. It asks why the Italian city states gained so much power in the fifteenth century and why they became the crucible of the Renaissance. It looks at the impact of the Reformation upon people’s sense of self and upon forms of government. It examines the reasons behind the growth of the state, the consequences of European imperial expansion and the influence changing forms of knowledge had upon this world. It also simply looks at how the human experience has altered and remained the same. It asks why we see this period as witnessing and producing what we call the “modern” world. We will examine these questions through many means that will push you to write and think critically. We will look at texts and art from the period and try to see them from the perspective of their creators.

HIST 104g, Modern Europe

This course description has been provided by Professor Paul Lerner.

In this class we will explore selected themes in the history of modern Europe, starting with the philosophical innovations of the Enlightenment, the political achievements of the French Revolution, and the economic and social consequences of industrialization. Rather than attempting a comprehensive, chronological survey of this period of European history, the course offers an in depth exploration of five major topics which have shaped the modern world: (1) The Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Politics; (2) The Industrial revolution, the Liberal Order, and the Transformation of Space and Time; (3) Empire, Race and the “New Imperialism”; (4) The End of the Liberal Order: World War I, Modernism and Revolution; and (5) Counterrevolution: War, Fascism and Mass Death in the Twentieth Century. We conclude with a section on Europe during and after the Cold War, surveying the ruins of the twentieth century from the vantage point of a post-communist, post-fascist, post-colonial and (one hopes) post-genocidal present. Our treatment of these topics will revolve around a number of fundamental questions, including: How did the major nineteenth-century ideologies of progress—Nationalism, Liberalism, Socialism, etc. — evolve into the repressive (fascist and communist) state systems of the twentieth century? How can we square the Enlightenment’s vision of reason, tolerance and natural rights with the brutality of modern state power, or in other words, what historical continuities and discontinuities can we trace from the Enlightenment through the killing fields of the Belgian Congo, the Nazi death camps and the mass graves of the former Yugoslavia? How, furthermore, did Europe’s position in the world change from the “new Imperialism” of the late nineteenth century through the end of the old colonial empires, and how did race become an organizing principle for so much of the world? And finally, what are the origins and characteristics of terror as a political weapon, from the radical phase of the French Revolution to the post-colonial struggles of the post-World War II world?
HIST 106g, Chinese Lives: An Introduction to Chinese History

This course description has been provided by Professor Brett Sheehan.

This course examines the broad sweep of Chinese history by focusing on important humanistic themes which challenge the students to think carefully about their preconceptions of what China is and what it means to be Chinese. By combining study of historical biography with use of a broad array of primary sources, ranging from law codes, to contracts, to fiction, the course teaches students to use critical thinking in a new appreciation of the diversity of Chinese historical experiences.

The course will focus on three important themes as a means to see social, cultural, and political change over long periods of time.

1) What is China and what does it mean to be Chinese? Is there a single geographical or political entity that can, over time, be identified as China, or are there beliefs, family structures, ideologies or cultural patterns which can be defined as Chinese? Alternatively, is “China” just a modern construct?

2) Who were the Chinese elites, how did they exercise dominance and how did hierarchies change over time? How can Chinese history help us understand the concept of monarchy or “kingship”?

3) What has been China’s place in the larger world context and how does that affect our understanding of Chinese and world history?

HIST 185g, Introduction to Armenian Studies and Armenian History

This course description has been provided by Professor Richard Antaramian.

This class will introduce you the unique history and cultures of Armenia and the Armenian people. People calling themselves Armenians have, over the last 2500 or so years, been kings, subjects, experienced diaspora and genocide, trotted the globe as merchants, constructed networks of churches, fought revolutions, built states, and even dabbled in terrorism. Despite the transnational and transregional experiences of these people, who have participated in any number of historical endeavors ranging from the Roman Empire to merchant activity in the early modern Indian Ocean to Soviet state-building, their stories have been reduced to a national narrative that privileges the “nation-form” that projects more contemporary categories for analysis backwards into history. In this class, we will therefore take a broad view of the Armenian past that will seek to challenge and destabilize prevailing assumptions structuring how this history is written by reading from a wide range of primary and secondary materials.

HIST 240g, History of California

This course description has been provided by Professor William Deverell.

History 240g is a broad survey of the history of California. Moving quickly through historical periods across, especially, the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, our aim is to get hold of, and analyze, the shifting meaning and significance of California through time. The course will pay particular attention to social, cultural, and political history, but we will also zero in on such issues as environmental and economic history. History 240g is also designed to highlight the remarkable diversity and ethnic/racial complexity of the California past; as such, we can expect to examine such closely such themes as Native American history, African American history, and the histories of other diverse peoples here on the Pacific Coast. History 240g is a lecture-driven course, and you must also enroll in a discussion section accompanying the lectures. Our attention on such diversity will focus on changing ideas and presumptions about race and ethnicity, as well as close attention to the dynamic history of global citizenship and identity as lived and perceived in California’s past.
JS 100gp, Jewish History

JS 100gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations.
This course description has been provided by Professor Joshua Garroway.

This course introduces students to the major events, personalities, and trends in Jewish history, from antiquity to the present. Spanning three millennia and five continents, the course explores the origins of the Jewish people, its experience as an autonomous nation and as a displaced minority in diaspora, its religion and its foundational texts, and its encounters with different cultures and ideas. The two principal themes of the course will be negotiation and diversity. On the first score, it will examine the various strategies employed by Jews when interacting with those around them, and how and why these strategies changed from time to time and from place to place. On the second, it will consider the variation among Jews themselves in any given period, asking why such variety emerged and in what ways continuity and uniformity were nevertheless maintained.

Exposure to the peculiar experience of the Jewish people is not the only objective of the course, however. Through the lectures, readings, and discussion sections, students should also gain an appreciation for the tools and methods utilized by historians of all stripes when investigating the past. Students will cultivate their own “historical perspective,” from which they will be able to examine historical sources critically, scrutinize their own assumptions, and construct cogent historical arguments.

LING 322xg, Language Contact and Language Acquisition

This course description has been provided by Professor Maria Luisa Zubizarreta.

How did human languages, a uniquely human characteristic, emerge and evolve? This is a fascinating and unresolved puzzle, for both linguists and biologists alike. Nonetheless, linguists have begun to gain some insight into these issues through the study of the birth and evolution of new languages (both spoken and signed), known as Creoles. In this course, we examine how Creoles emerged in socio-historical situations where linguistic input is degraded and insufficient to support the “ordinary” language acquisition process. At the center of the debate on Creole genesis is the question of whether (1) Creole formation can be abrupt, attributed exclusively to a generation of young children deprived of a coherent and grammatically complex linguistic input (as in the plantations of the 18th and 19th centuries) or (2) whether Creole formation developed from a Pidgin through an extended process that cuts across at least two generations of speakers (the first one being bilingual and the second one mostly monolingual). The first view attributes a central role in Creole genesis to linguistic universals and the innate language faculty that characterize first language acquisition. By contrast, the second view advocates a central role in Creole genesis to bilingualism or second language acquisition, without necessarily denying the importance of linguistic universals. At the crux of this debate is the issue of the role of the substrate languages in Creole formation. Can the main grammatical structures of Creoles be attributed entirely to the “substrate” languages, with the dominant language functioning as the “lexifier”, via the cognitive mechanism of “transfer” known to be active in second language acquisition? Or are the main grammatical properties of Creoles independent of the substrate languages, reflecting the unmarked choices of a biologically-determined innate language faculty?

In the first part of the course, we will address the above issues through the study of several case studies of Creole languages, in particular the Caribbean Creoles, the French Creoles of the Indian Ocean, the French Creoles of Louisiana (and their relation to Acadian French), and the Hawaiian Creole, paying special attention to the socio-historical and demographic contexts in which they emerged. We will examine selected grammatical properties, and compare them to those of the relevant contact languages.

In the second part of the course, we review studies on how sign languages are acquired in a linguistically deprived environment and how these illuminate the debate on language emergence, evolution, and acquisition. We examine the cases of American Sign Language (ASL) and of sign languages in Nicaragua (Lenguaje de Signos Nicaraguense and Idiomas de Signos Nicaraguense). This will be followed by a review of various issues in bilingualism: the sensitivity to distinct linguistic rhythms in newborns, phonological and grammatical acquisition in early and late bilinguals, the mechanism of code-
switching, and the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. We end the course with a discussion of “language death: problem and prognosis”.

**PHIL 166g, Current Moral and Social Issues**

*Formerly PHIL 140g, Contemporary Moral and Social Issues.*

This course description has been provided by Professor Jacob Ross.

In this class we will discuss some of the most controversial questions of our time concerning how we ought to act as individuals and what rules we should follow as a society. Some of these questions concern the morality of killing. When it is permissible to kill another human being or human organism. Is OK to kill a fetus? When it is permissible to kill in self-defense, or as a form of punishment, or in the context of combat? And what about non-human animals? What justifies killing them, if anything? Other questions we will discuss concern love, sex, and marriage. What kinds of sexual acts are wrong, and what makes them wrong? Who should be allowed to marry whom? And is there anything morally wrong with prostitution, or with pornography, or with sexist jokes? And some questions concern justice and fairness. Is it fair for schools or employers to take into account ethnicity in hiring or admission? Is it fair for some to be born into wealth and others into poverty, and do such differences give rise to moral obligations? And is it ever just to restrict what people can say or read or consume? We will examine arguments on both sides of these issues, and explore them in a critical and reflective manner.

**PHIL 174g, Freedom, Equality, and Social Justice**

This course description has been provided by Professor Jonathan Quong.

What is a just society? How should the major social, political, economic, and legal institutions of our society be designed if our goal is to live in a just society? How should we understand the relationship between allegedly conflicting political values or ideals within a just society? In particular, how should we balance the demands of freedom and equality? What does equality of opportunity mean, and is this a social ideal to which we should aspire? Is there any sense in which wages in a free market economy can be unjust or exploitative? How does any government gain the authority to make laws and coercively impose those laws on citizens? Can laws ever be legitimate if they are not just? This course will focus on these questions, among others, and in doing so, provide students with the opportunity to think critically about questions that are both philosophically fascinating and politically urgent.

**PHIL 256g, Science, Religion, and the Making of the Modern Mind**

This course description has been provided by Professor Jacob Ross.

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century has had a profound and lasting influence on modern thought. The revolution was itself made possible by philosophical and theological innovations (the decline of Aristotelianism, the Reformation), and it in turn shaped subsequent changes in philosophy and religion. By focusing on these reciprocating influences between philosophy, science, and religion in the seventeenth century, and on the similar issues involved in the nineteenth century controversies over Darwin’s theories and even, to some extent, in the current debate over evolution vs. creationism, the course will introduce students to some important events in the history of science and in doing so will trace the development of the notion of scientific explanation.

**PHIL 260g, Ethical Theory and Practice**

This course description has been provided by Professor Jacob Ross.

What explains why some actions are morally right and other actions are morally wrong? In this course we will examine several approaches to answering this question, including consequentialist approaches that understand rightness and wrongness in terms of consequences, deontological approaches that understand rightness and wrongness in terms of rules,
and virtue-based approaches that understand rightness and wrongness in terms of moral character. We will also explore the implications of these views for a number of concrete moral issues.

**REL 111g, The World of the Hebrew Bible**

*This course description has been provided by Professor Bruce Zuckerman.*

The aim of this course is to give a comprehensive introduction to the Hebrew Bible, concentrating on the most central theological issues in all three subdivisions of the scriptures, according to Jewish tradition: the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings. While we shall closely consider what the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament can contribute to our knowledge of history of the Ancient Near East, and also consider the literary aspects of the individual biblical texts, neither the “Bible as History” nor the “Bible as Literature” will be the central focus in this course. Rather, we will focus upon the Bible as the religious document out of which emerged those basic theological concepts that have had a decisive impact on global civilization. Our particular concern will therefore be biblical ideas about the nature of God, the relationship of the Deity to mankind, and the overall human condition.

**REL 112g, Religions of Egypt and the Ancient Near East**

*This course description has been provided by Professor Lynn Dodd.*

Egypt and the societies of the ancient Middle East are a source of enduring fascination, both as places of mystery and as places where radical changes in human history and thinking occurred. By reading ancient texts in English translation, we gain a privileged view of the belief systems and life practices of Egypt, the Hittite world, Sumer, Babylon, Mitanni, Hurri, Elam, Israel and Canaan. This course takes us back hundreds, even thousands, of years before the earliest copies of the Bible were placed in secret caves overlooking the Dead Sea and Alexander the Great’s armies spread Greek ideas with their victories to the edges of the known world.

Many of the ideas of Ancient Egypt and the Near East resonate in our own laws, social mores, stories, and even in beliefs about ourselves. Some were transmitted through the classical traditions of Greece, Rome, and India, while others were preserved in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Through illustrated lectures, readings, optional fieldtrips, and discussions, we will discover what an ideal death was like; how the world was created; what justified killing another human being; how eternal life could be achieved and what it was like; and how to use magic, sorcery, and divination to influence health, love, and fortune in battle.

Emphasis is placed on reading primary textual sources (in translation) and on material culture (the archaeological finds) including hands-on access to ancient objects in USC’s own collection.

**REL 141g, Global Religions in Los Angeles**

*This course description has been provided by Professor Duncan Williams.*

This course examines the interplay of global religions, ethnicity, immigration, sexual orientation, politics, and social justice in the contemporary American context. It is at once a survey of the major world religions as well as investigation of human religiosity, questions of ultimate meaning, and ethics in an increasingly globalized era for religious communities.

Even though there are some notable exceptions of genuinely pluralistic religious communities, the residents of Los Angeles, tend to segregate themselves into different religious enclaves, including immigrant congregations. Distinct racial, ethnic and social class divisions mark these communities and even within these contexts, there is growing tension over sexual orientation and other issues around sexuality such as contraception, abortion, and gender roles. Through video presentations, fieldtrips, group projects and lectures by the two principle faculty (Don Miller and Duncan Williams), guest lectures from the School of Religion faculty, as well as Los Angeles religious leaders, students will learn how these diverse groups interact with each other and with the city of Los Angeles at large.
Los Angeles is a world-class laboratory for the study of religion. It is home to more than six hundred different religious groups, including many faith traditions that were brought to Southern California by immigrants. This course surveys the rich variety of congregational expressions of religion, but it also acknowledges that many individuals pursue a spiritual quest that is not located in an organized religious community.

Exposure to the many religious groups and spiritual pursuits in Los Angeles will involve fieldtrips to notable religious institutions in the Los Angeles area that are accessible through public transportation (e.g., DASH or Redline). In addition, the students will participate, through learning group teams, in the geo-mapping of and fieldwork about religious institutions in the immediate area of the USC campus. The course includes the introduction of methods and analytical tools from ethnography, fieldwork studies, and other humanistic and social sciences to enable students to make sense of the complexities of the array of social issues that a multi-religious city like Los Angeles brings to the fore.

In the nearly 20 years since the 1992 civil unrest, the Los Angeles faith community has significantly expanded its role in the public sphere. The social response to the Rodney King verdict was a watershed moment that provided an opportunity for congregations and other religious bodies to establish relationships across racial, ethnic, and economic divides. Since that time, there have been significant demographic and political changes that have altered the landscape of Los Angeles, and of the faith community. While faith groups have always participated to varying degrees in the public sphere, over the past two decades they have become expected partners in dealing with social issues. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of faith-based nonprofit organizations and a diversity of approaches to the problems they seek to address.

Some of the assigned readings are specific to Los Angeles; other readings focus more broadly on religious traditions in the United States. In addition, documentary films will be shown on occasion, and students are invited to draw on the excellent Internet resources that describe religious life in Southern California.

REL 359g, Culture in Diaspora: The Jews of Spain

This course description has been provided by Professor Jessica Marglin.

1492 marked the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, which had been one of the most flourishing centers of the Jewish world. But the end of Jewish life in Spain did not mean the end of Spanish Jews; on the contrary, Sephardic Jews (as the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula are called) retain a distinct identity even today. This course traces the Jewish diaspora from Spain and Portugal with particular attention to how Sephardic Jews maintained ties of culture, commerce, language, and identity across increasingly large distances. We will examine how Jews from Spain formed a particularly vibrant culture before and, especially, after their dispersal. How did their Sephardic identity help them cope with the displacement that began in 1492 and, for many Jews, persisted for centuries? Conversely, how did this constant migration contribute to a distinct culture forged in diaspora? In short, how did these Jews make meaning out of medieval Jewish history's greatest tragedy?

We begin with a brief overview of the history of Jews in Spain and Portugal. We then move on to examine the nature of Sephardic life in North Africa, the Middle East, Italy, Europe, and the Americas. Throughout we will ask how Sephardic Jewish identity was expressed through language, literature, and culture. We will also examine how Sephardic Jews used their transnational ties to their coreligionists to advance their commercial interests and the unique ways in which Sephardic Jewry faced modernization. We will end the class by examining aspects of Sephardic Jews' experience in America today, including how a number of Christians in the American Southwest are claiming a “crypto-Jewish” identity as the descendants of marranos (Jews converted to Christianity).

SLL 345g, Literature and Philosophy: Dostoevsky

This course description has been provided by Professor Marcus Levitt.

Dostoevsky is one of the most amazing writers and thinkers, celebrated variously as a philosopher, religious thinker, pioneer psychologist, and political prophet. This course focuses on problems of reading Dostoevsky, centering on the drama of the personality coming to consciousness. While Dostoevsky is rightly known as a writer of ideas, for him there is no thought
without a thinker. Ideas are carried by—embodied in—concrete living beings, with all of their imperfections, doubts, and weaknesses. Hence the quest for philosophical truth is always filtered through the prism (and struggle) of the unique, imperfect human self. Psychology, then, is a fundamental issue (or stumbling block) for philosophy, and one goal of this course is to explore their interrelation. At the same time, the problem of the self is also necessarily embedded in narrative, in storytelling. Just as ideas are embodied in particular selves, the “self” (in literature as well as in psychology) is defined by stories. A further goal of this course is to explore the ways in which Dostoevsky’s philosophical concerns translate into brilliantly innovative narrative strategies.

We will read four short works, radical experiments with first-person narration that represent successive stages in “self-narration,” as well as three of Dostoevsky’s major novels. These latter are: Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, and Devils, works that pose fundamental questions about the nature of good and evil, and about human beings’ ability—or failure—to achieve authentic self-knowledge.

SWMS 215gp, Gender Conflict Across Cultural Contexts

*SWMS 215gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations.*

*This course description has been provided by Professor Sherry Velasco.*

This course teaches students to examine the historical and cultural foundations of gender in contemporary and past societies by tracing the development of gender conflict within humanistic inquiry across multiple cultures, regions, and periods. Students will begin to distinguish among aspects of gender relations specific to particular cultures at a particular moment, reflecting on the human experience of those individuals and groups who transgressed traditional expectations for gender identities.

Course topics and approaches may vary by instructor. Course materials will come from the arts and letters from several societies in different regions of the world and/or periods of history. Class periods will include lecture, multimedia presentations, and group work. Students will learn to use and critique primary sources as well as scholarly analyses from multiple disciplinary perspectives and intellectual traditions including literary, historical, artistic, philosophical, legal, ethical, and religious. While the course traces gender conflict through multiple traditions and periods, all sections of the course will include an analysis of the human experience in contemporary contexts. The comparative study of cultural traditions will help students arrive at their own understanding of contemporary gender relations and identity.

Regular participation in discussion sessions as well as weekly blogging assignments are designed to help students gradually develop complex critical interpretative skills and learn how to work together to make sense of often unfamiliar evidence. Short papers will help them learn to identify and frame problems of their own choosing related to gender conflicts. Ultimately, students should emerge from this course familiar with intellectual traditions that cross cultural settings and periods and be able to understand some of the major ways in which people relate to the past through the lens of gender and to apply that lens critically to their own experience in society.

SWMS 301gm, Feminist Theory: an Introduction

*This course description has been provided by Professor Diana Blaine.*

While nothing might seem more obvious than the existence of men and women, students will discover that the meanings of those seemingly stable categories vary wildly throughout time and place. From fundamental biological definitions to the appropriate roles for each sex in society, to the very composition of society itself, social engineers and theorists continually challenge and redefine traditional beliefs. These challenges produce new possibilities and instabilities and result in nothing short of revolution. By surveying primary texts from anthropological, psychological, economic, sociological, literary, biological, historical, and spiritual movements, students are introduced to the various ways that these revolutions have altered convention, both within academic disciplines and in society at large. Ultimately, through exposure to these ideological and philosophical documents, students will apprehend that feminism itself is not a monolith, has many inherent
contradictions, intersects well and poorly with other global and local agendas, and, finally, must be considered, for it goes to the very heart of who we are as humans, how we want to live our lives, and where we want to take this planet.