GE-H, Traditions and Historical Foundations

Courses that meet this requirement examine the historical and cultural foundations of contemporary societies over a substantial period of time by teaching students to understand the enduring influence of literary, political, economic, philosophical, legal, ethical and religious traditions.

AHIS 120gp, Foundations of Western Art

This course description has been provided by Professor Carolyn Malone.

This introductory course on the foundations of western art up to the sixteenth century concentrates on art and architecture as fundamental forms of human expression that can reveal how man has understood what it means to be human and to interact with his environment. Near Eastern and Egyptian visual forms were developed by the Greeks and Romans to express the humanistic values that became the basis of western civilization. These classical forms, in turn, were transformed during the Middle Ages to accord with Christianity. During the Renaissance, when the belief in man as the measure of all things was stressed, the classical forms of antiquity were imitated in admiration of the civilization of Greece and Rome, but now within a Christian context. As a visual expression of its culture, art is a primary historical document conveying ideas and values. When interpreted in relation to primary textural sources within an historical context, it can help us to understand the traditions of western culture that have had a fundamental and lasting intellectual and ethical impact on our current global culture. In order to facilitate within this broad period of time a critical understanding of the cultural transformations of artistic form and the western values and traditions that art and architecture have expressed, the course is divided into three chronological periods: Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance.

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

AMST 301gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.

This course description has been provided by Professor Thomas Gustafson.

This course counts as an elective course for the majors and minors associated with the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity (ASE). AMST 301gp will examine the foundations of American civilization in the words and acts of exploration, escape, conquest, revolution, constitution-making, pioneering, immigration, slavery, and war. As a course for the majors and minors in ASE, it will emphasize methods for engaging in interdisciplinary and comparative cultural study. The course draws upon various modes of inquiry including literary, historical, artistic, and political analysis, and it will compare and contrast the stories and experiences of diverse groups of people who have composed America and occupied this common ground.

The readings, viewings, and listenings for the course, which are mostly drawn from primary sources, span in time from 1492 to 2013, but they are not presented in strict chronological order. Instead they are often grouped together in thematic patterns to reveal continuity and change in the course of American history. For instance, readings for a group of classes will be structured to create juxtapositions between a past historical event--e.g., Columbus’ ‘discovery’ of America, the creation of the Constitution, or the California Gold Rush of 1849-50--and how these events have been reinterpreted in subsequent eras such as in the Quincentennial of Columbus’ ‘discovery’ in 1992-93, the Bicentennial of the Constitution in 1987-89, and the 150th anniversary of the Gold Rush and California statehood in 2000. Controversy and debate surrounded each of these commemorations, and through a study of primary works drawn from history, literature, politics, and popular culture, this course will examine not only the words and actions of famous founders such as Columbus and Jefferson but also the attempts of a wide variety of activists and dissenters to reconstruct the legacy of these founders in new efforts to pursue a better understanding of our past and advance the cause of liberty, justice, equality, civil rights, and a more perfect union. At
the heart of the course will be a close study of some of the most significant primary texts in American history and culture including John Winthrop’s “Model of Christian Charity” sermon, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, Frederick Douglass’ oration “What to the Slave is the 4th of July,” the Gettysburg Address, Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Significance of the Frontier in American History” essay, and Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech.

The form of critical thinking this course will practice (and seek to develop) is a combination of what I call “democratic thinking” and “integrative thinking.” “Democratic thinking” is the effort to study history and culture by listening to a multiplicity of voices that check and balance (and even contradict) each other rather than reposing authority in any single voice or mode of representation. “Integrative thinking” is the effort to find places of likeness, similarity, commonality, consensus amidst a wide variety of conflicting, diverse voices. “Democratic thinking” respects diversity and makes contrasts; “Integrative thinking” respects similarity and makes comparisons or syntheses.

This course is subdivided into six sections, and each section will be devoted to a key foundation (or refoundation) moment for America in general or for California and Los Angeles in particular. An overriding thematic pattern for this course will be an effort to view America, the frontier, and the new West as scenes of cultural clashes and exchanges and as a crossroads where people from different nationalities, religions, and ethnicities have at once crashed and merged together. We will emphasize both the frictions that resulted from such collisions (e.g., war, ethnic cleansing, riots) and the fusions (e.g., jazz music, the Civil Rights movement, the teriyaki burrito).

The FIRST section (I) of the course will begin with the collision of peoples in the riot/civil unrest/uprising in Los Angeles 1992, and in the SECOND section (II) this event will be juxtaposed against the “culture clash” that began 500 years earlier between European peoples and the peoples of the Americas as represented by Columbus and the Taino tribe of Native Americans (a clash that soon resulted in peoples from a third continent—Africa—coming to the Americas as slaves). The THIRD section (III) will focus on the founders who created the United States through the clash of protest/riot/rebellion/compromise that produced the words of the Declaration and the Constitution. The FOURTH section (IV) will turn to another set of founders in the American imagination: the pioneers who “settled” the country by deeds of adventurism, community-building, corporate enterprise, ethnic cleansing, and war. This section of the course will also give attention to our “forgotten founders”—the Americans Indians who first settled and civilized this land. Here, in the West, we will see, is where people came to begin their lives anew and to escape others in what was perceived to be an “open space” of freedom and opportunity. But here is also where we have all run into each other in terrifying collisions and joyous or hard-won mergers. The course will then turn in its FIFTH section (V) to the study of the foundation and development of 20th century California/Hollywood/Los Angeles as we consider the relationship between American politics and the mythology of the frontier and the connection between two of America’s most potent dream factories—Hollywood and Washington D.C.—in the age of film. This section concludes with a study of the politics of four presidents who have claimed or who manifest a special relationship to the frontier and the West: John Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush. In the SIXTH (VI) and final section, we will consider how contemporary Los Angeles can serve as a laboratory for investigating how Californians and Angelenos are responding to the problems and challenges the United States faces at the beginning of the 21st century. This is a region confronting the crises of modern America: environmental threats, racial and ethnic friction, urban violence, and the strains associated with American uprootedness, mobility, and materialism. We will also try to learn more about America by stepping outside of American culture and examining how writers and public intellectuals from foreign countries view America.

As the first university founded in this region, and as a university committed to educating the leaders of Southern California, USC has an obligation to be an intellectual resource for studying the social problems of this region and for helping students understand the rich mix of tongues, rituals and stories that compose the West and the United States as a whole. This course seeks to provide an opportunity for fulfilling that obligation.
CLAS 151gp, Civilization of Rome

CLAS 151gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.
This course description has been provided by Professor Vincent Farenga.

The aim of this course is to study and discuss key aspects of ancient Rome that have had and continue to have an impact on later periods of human culture. The course will consider interrelated issues of ethics, politics, social structure, and literary, philosophical and artistic creativity in order to address three questions: 1. Why does ancient Rome matter? 2. What do we have to learn from its achievements and failures? 3. What are its enduring legacies? It will do this by examining the political and social institutions and crises of Rome’s most documented period (the late republic and early empire), analyzing in detail several of its most celebrated cultural achievements and their developments in the post-Roman world.

Among the areas of focus: 1. Roman Civilization: the Roman Senate; Roman law; the Roman class system; Roman theater; Roman poetry (including lyric and epic); Roman architecture, sculpture and painting; Roman philosophy (including Stoicism and Epicureanism). 2. Rome’s Legacies: in political, social and legal structure (U.S.A); in drama (comedy and tragedy); in poetry (lyric and epic); in architecture (esp. the basilica and the dome), in urban planning (esp. the organic structuring of space and the politics of space), in sculpture (esp. portraiture and its ideology) and in painting (esp. landscape and domestic interiors), in philosophy (esp. the ethics of self). Among work required of the students will be the detailed examination and analysis of four dramas (Plautus’ Swaggering Soldier, Seneca’s Thyestes, Shakespeare’s Merry Wives of Windsor and Titus Andronicus), a selection of lyric poems (of Catullus and Renaissance poets), one epic poem (Virgil’s Aeneid) and selections from two others (Dante’s Inferno and Milton’s Paradise Lost), one political tract (Augustus’ Res Gestae) – and selected monuments, sculptures, and paintings both ancient and modern.

CLAS 320gmp, Diversity and the Classical Western Tradition

CLAS 151gmp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.
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

COLT 101gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.
This course description has been provided by Professor Vincent Farenga.

COLT 101 offers a broad, conceptual introduction to masterpieces and master thinkers 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. In 15 weeks you’ll get acquainted with nearly 20 writers and texts.

Whenever this course is taught, it foregrounds a question or theme that links these works and thinkers to one another and to contemporary thinkers who join them in creating a tradition addressing the same question or theme. This semester our key question is: Do human beings have a soul? Important derivative questions include: If yes, what is its nature and function? If no, why has this concept persisted for at least 2800 years in a tradition of thinking and writing about the soul? Is the soul an essential part of the self? How has the nature of selfhood changed in the Western tradition of examining the soul?

More specifically, you will confront the challenges offered by the following texts and thinkers:
1. Some texts are the great narratives that mark the Western tradition: the epic wanderings of Odysseus and Aeneas, the tragic fate of Oedipus, the strange encounter of Cupid and Psyche, Dante’s descent into Hell, the legend of Dr. Faustus, the Princess of Clève’s exploration of self-consciousness and personal autonomy.

2. Other texts introduce you to original thinkers who offer analysis, polemic and enlightenment. Plato’s and Socrates’ philosophical dialogues debate the soul’s immortality and inner dynamics. Some of their contemporaries (Democritus, Epicurus) argue that the soul is material and mortal. The founder of Christianity, Jesus, offers a radically new sense of the soul and morality, while Augustine’s spiritual autobiography dramatizes how hard this was for non-Christians to accept.

3. Intellectual supermen like Pico della Miranda, Nostradamus, Faust, and Descartes extend the frontiers of human knowledge by equating the soul with the mind. Rousseau cries out for the modern self’s need for freedom but also meditates on the need for solitude. Wordsworth explores how childhood, memory and imagination are essential to a modern sense of self.

**COLT 264gp, Asian Aesthetic and Literature Traditions**

*COLT 264gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.*

*This course description has been provided by Professor Dominic Cheung.*

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 102gp, Culture and Values: Thematic Option Honors Program**

*This course is only for a specified cohort of students.*

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

*EALC 110gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry. 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.

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

*EALC 130gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry. 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](http://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 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.

**EASC 150gp, East Asian Societies**

*EASC 150gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-C, Social Analysis. This course description has been provided by Professor David Kang.*

This course is an introduction to the politics, culture, society and business of East Asia, and is designed to prepare the student to take a wide variety of upper-division courses across the humanities and the social sciences. The overarching goal of this class is to prepare students to understand issues about East Asia. Although focused mainly on Korea, Japan, and China, the course will also occasionally discuss Southeast Asian countries as well. As a dynamic region with vibrant economies, unresolved political disputes, and encompassing as much as a quarter of the world’s population, East Asia is diverse and complex. While sharing some similarities, the societies, cultures, economy, and politics of the two Koreas, Japan, and China are also identifiably distinct. This course will provide an overview and context of the history and contemporary issues involved in East Asia. Some themes recur throughout the course: the painful and sometimes turbulent interactions between East Asian countries with the rest of the world; the complex and evolving relations among countries within East Asia itself; and the question of to what extent these East Asian states are unique in their worldviews, identities, and experiences.

**JS 100gp, Jewish History**

*JS 100gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry. 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. In this sense, the course is consistent with the objectives of the USC general education program, which is designed “to nurture habits of thought essential for professional success and personal development, to establish a background for lifelong learning.”

**SLL 330gp, Russian Thought and Civilization**

*This course description has been provided by Professor Sarah Pratt.*

In this course you will grapple with key aspects of Russian culture as they shaped early Russian national identity and continue to the present day in various forms. Two particular aspects will be emphasized: the role of religion and visual culture in shaping this identity, and Russia’s reaction to and interaction with Western culture. If courses had key words, the key words for this one would be icon, holiness, Russia, West, reason, non-reason, tradition, and revolution. We will examine the way these concepts act as driving forces at various stages in Russian cultural history, as well as the way the forces interact with each other.

We will have informal evaluations from time to time to see how things stand and make adjustments as necessary. By the end of the course, you should not only know a number of specific things about Russian thought and civilization, but also be able to grapple effectively with the broader cultural issues of religion and ideology, revolutionary thinking, and interactions between “eastern” and “western” culture. In short, I want you to be a capable and fearless thinker with the skill to express your thinking in writing and discussion.

**SWMS 215gp, Gender Conflict Across Cultural Contexts**

*SWMS 215gp also satisfies the requirement in GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry.*

*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.