

Sample Liberal Studies Concentration Courses

ART 341 The Decisive Moment: A Creative and Critical Overview of Photography

3 Units

The Decisive Moment introduces students to the history and aesthetics of the photographic medium. To provide context, the course begins by covering the history of photography from its invention to the digital era. Students view examples of the various genres in slide presentations, and seminal readings by important writers, theorists and critics and discussed as they relate to the topics covered each week. Emphasis is placed on students developing an eye for photographic composition and an understanding of the aesthetic, ethical and theoretical underpinnings of individual photographer's work. Special topics include the unique relationship between censorship and photography, as well as the work and influence of women photographers and photographers of color.

ART 401/HUM 401: Vibrant Bodies: A History of Performance Art

3 Units

In this class we will explore the radical, anarchic phenomenon of performance art. We will examine its heady historical origins, as a reaction to the aesthetic constraints of visual art and theater, and the social constraints of the time. We will investigate performance art's intimate relation to identity politics, along with its crucial role in the so-called "Culture Wars" in the US in the 1980's. Through lecture, viewings and guest visits from some of Los Angeles's leading performance artists, we will explore different contemporary movements in performance, with particular attention given to transgressive body and identity-based work. Through dialogue, analysis and practical performance investigations students will familiarize themselves with the vibrant possibilities of this exciting discipline.

CIN 360/HUM 360A: The Seduction of Seeing: Cinema and Ideology

3 Units

This course examines the concept of ideology as it relates to cinema. Through lecture, viewings and dialogue, we will examine film as a socio-political apparatus, and the ways in which it not merely reflects but constructs and at times limits our identities. Using a historical approach, we will focus on representations of "otherness" in the mainstream Hollywood vernacular, specifically through the lens of race, gender and sexual identity. Specific attention will be given not only to the coercive nature of these images, but the ways in which politics interacts with desire in cinema, ideology inevitably unravels and undermines itself, giving way to something resembling pleasure. We will also show excerpts from radical attempts to create new modes of cinema and new forms of seeing.

ENG294/5: Style & Argument

3 Units

Communication leads to community—that is, to understanding, intimacy, and mutual valuing. – Rollo May

As members of a variety of communities, we are not only required but often obligated to communicate with others. In Style and Argument, we focus on honing our individual abilities as well as considering issues of ethics in communication. This course examines persuasion in many types of media and suggests a wide variety of discourses—from text to television, verse to video—that can be understood as practices of argument. The course covers the distinction between argument and opinion, encouraging a move from subjective writer-centered to effective reader-centered writing strategies, and also focuses on the identification, development, and evaluation of arguments and supportive evidence. Overall, the purpose of this course is to equip students with the tools they need to become effective and responsible persuasive communicators in their personal, professional, and academic lives.

HUM 316 Human Rights and Children

3 Units

This upper-division course uses a case study approach to address the issue of human rights and children. The rights of children are examined from a national and international perspective as well as from the point of view of political philosophy. The national perspective uses Supreme Court cases that have examined and established children's rights such as limiting or forbidding child labor, protection of the dependent and incompetent, constraints on parental authority, children's' rights to access to education and medical services.

HUM 333A Voices and Visions: American Indian, European and African Experience of New World Democracy

3 Units

American Indians lived and still live under various forms of government, including egalitarian ones, led by men and women elders. This course focuses on the roots of American Democracy. It enlists eyewitness accounts of the violence attendant on the "birth" of the nation and presents autobiographical pamphlets and great speeches in which the highest human ideals triumph over corrupting tyranny. For part of the journey, students enlist as a guide a young Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, who spent only nine months in the United States, in 1831-32.

HUM 354 19th Century American Utopian Communities

3 Units

This interdisciplinary on-line humanities course will explore the diverse array of American utopian communities that emerged during the 19th century. Exemplary communities to be examined include: the Shakers, the Harmony Society, the Zoarists, New Harmony, Yellow Springs communities, Brook Farm, Fruit lands, the Amana Society, the Oneida community, the Icarians, and Modern Times. These communities are placed in their historical, sociological, and economic context, and the variety of impulses that conditioned the rise of utopian communities will be examined.

HUM 390U Contemporary Crises: Palestine and Israel

1 Unit

This class examines the period from 1887 to 1948, the year of founding of the state of Israel, and asks students to consider the following questions: How did the current division of land come about? What was the effect of the Holocaust on the transformation of Palestine? What relationship developed over time between the United States and Israel? Most crucially, what was the fate of the Palestinians? The class suggests that during this crucial period the stage was set for everything that has since followed in this most tortured part of the world. Therefore, the course assists students in developing their understanding of the current crisis.

HUM 394A Western Constructions of the Primitive

3 Units

This interdisciplinary course critically investigates the various ways the west has constructed otherness through the prism of the primitive. Drawing from classical literature, anthropology, travel narratives, ethnography, art history, psychology, philosophy and popular culture—from Homer to Freud by way of Tarzan—students wrestle with questions of the primitive, civilization, otherness, identity, self and representation, in an effort to better understand practices of marginalization and aggrandizement.

MUS 321/SOC 321 Politics and Music in 20th Century Western Culture

3 Units

This course examines how Western politics over the past century have been negotiated in music. This entails looking not only at instances of specifically “political music,” but also at the multifarious uses and effects of music in 20th century Western political discourse. Drawing on informed critical analysis of musical practices, contextual study of historical events and influences, and investigation of creative processes, students explore how political ideologies and practices (in the past 100 years and now) are both represented and shaped by the cultural practice of music. The first goal is to become familiar with writing, listening, and speaking critically about the relationship between musical works and history. Then, students address how politics connects to issues of nationalism, oppression, war, pacifism, globalization, imperialism, morality, activism, spirituality, and religion, and how people have used music as an expression of such political complexities. Looking at art music, jazz, experimental music, and popular music, students explore the wide range of musical ways that societies, cultural groups, and individuals engage with politics—from the explicit, to the subtle, to the hidden.