

PAVILION SEMINARS – SPRING 2016

“Markets and Morality” (Sahar Akhtar)

This course will introduce students to economic principles and ethical theories by exploring a range of topics connected to the morality of markets and trade. Questions explored will include: whether some things (e.g., kidneys, sex) should not be for sale; whether engaging in market activity can cause one to become more selfish; and, whether placing a price on certain things (e.g., votes) changes the meaning of that thing. In addition to surveying the relevant literature, the course will examine these questions through “hands-on” activities, such as economic games and experimental market transactions.

Celebrity and the Human Condition (Andrea Press)

Is it “human nature” to idolize industrial moguls, political and military leaders, and literary, film, music, television stars? Is celebrity endemic to the human condition, or specific to consumer capitalism? Is the “cult” of the celebrity a product of the newly prolonged state of adolescence, or has it been created and fueled by a particular phase of commercial media culture? This seminar will examine the phenomenon of celebrity, looking at the earliest known instances of celebrity cults; their transformation in early capitalist literary, political, and economic culture; the transformation of “idols of production” to “idols of consumption” concomitant with the rise of capitalism, and the cultural and economic apparatus of the Hollywood film industry; the cult of the film “star” in Hollywood’s “Golden Age”; postwar U.S. celebrity and the development of the “American Dream”; interconnections between celebrity cults, fandom, and the political civil rights, sexual liberation, student activist and women’s movements; the global nature and enduring importance of celebrity in the age of new media. The course will include case-studies of celebrities beginning with Alexander the Great, and continuing through the twentieth and twenty-first century to include more contemporary examples. Students will analyze their own history during adolescence either adoring particular celebrities or rejecting the cult of celebrity, writing self-histories of their experiences. In addition, students will choose an ongoing or past celebrity cult focused on one figure, living or dead, and chart and analyze activity both online and off used to commemorate and honor a particular celebrity. Textual analyses in this project will be supplemented whenever possible with interview and observational data when possible. A creative component, such as a film or video of celebrity or fan commemorative practices, can be included in this assignment. The course has no pre-requisites and is broadly open to students in the University.

Science and Politics (Seunghun Lee)

More often than not, Science is intertwined with Religion and Politics. This course will provide students with an opportunity to study the entanglement of Science, Religion, and Politics, and how they have driven national and international policies. Examples will include the Galileo’s affair, evolution, early Christianity, the Imperial Japanese Army’s Unit 731, Nazi Germany’s eugenics, the syphilis experiments in Guatemala, the Manhattan project, decision to use the atomic bomb, and the Snowden files. Truth, reality, ethics and the anthropology of those involved will be examined in several exemplary cases. Books, movies, videos, memoirs, and case studies will be used as course materials.

Slavery: Ancient, Modern, Contemporary (Lawrie Balfour)

American slavery, writes historian David Brion Davis, was “the ultimate form of inhuman bondage.” The intimate relationship between the rise of New World slavery and modern democracy is the starting point for the seminar. But because the practice of slavery is as old and as geographically far-reaching as human society itself, we will also engage in a comparative and historical exploration of the meanings of enslavement in ancient times, in the modern era, and the contemporary world. We will consider the following questions: What is slavery? How has been practiced at different times and in different places? How have the practices of slavery related to race, gender, sexuality, religion, and nationality? What are the grounds on which it has been defended? How have the enslaved resisted? What are the political, ethical, economic, and aesthetic implications of human bondage and its legacies? Do we have a responsibility to reckon with the slave past?

“Empire Many Ways: History, Literature, Culture” (Krishan Kumar)

Empires have been the experience of humanity for much of recorded history. This course aims to consider the life of empires from a variety of perspectives - historical, literary, cultural. The reading will mostly consist of texts dealing with empire from one of these perspectives. There will be brief, synoptic, histories, aiming to highlight the main features of empires; there will be novels of empire, such as those by E. M. Forster, Leo Tolstoy, and Albert Camus; and there will be critical and cultural studies and reflections, such as those of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. Empires, it will be shown, are not just past history but live on in various guises and in the memories of the nations that once ruled empires.

Mark Edmundson (Seven Ages/Seven Questions)

In this course we’ll ask one demanding question related to each period of human life. Students will do some reading about the question, then some writing. Here are the current ideas for the questions and the reading:

Intro: Shakespeare and the Seven Ages

Infant: What is a child? Reading: Wordsworth “Intimations Ode”; Freud “Childhood Sexuality”

The Schoolboy: What is education? Montaigne, On Education

The Lover: What is erotic love? Stendhal, On Love; Sappho, lyrics

The Soldier: What is Courage? Homer, selections from The Iliad.

The Justice: What is History? Marx, Communist Manifesto; Whitman, Democratic Vistas

The Pantaloon: What is Death? Gwande, Being Mortal; Dalai Lama, Thoughts on Death

Mere Oblivion: Who is God? Book of Job; Plato, Myth of Er; Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha

The readings are goads and not guides. This course will focus on the students and on what they can bring to these questions from their own points of view. The premise is the one Shakespeare suggests: each age of life has its own questions, or question: we should do what we can to answer them.

Why do we teach? (Antonia LoLordo)

There has been a lot of talk at UVA and elsewhere recently about the purpose of a liberal arts education. And there have been a lot of debates about the proper content of primary and secondary education. But both these discussions presuppose answers to an earlier, more fundamental question: why do we teach our kids anything at all? Many different accounts of the purpose of education have been given. We teach our children so that they will be effective members of the ruling class, so that they will be prepared for the workforce, or so that they can take their place in a predetermined social hierarchy. We teach our children to read so that they can read the Bible, the Quran, or the Torah. We send our daughters to school so that they can become good wives and mothers. We teach our children in order to inculcate the correct values or the correct tastes. We teach our children to help them realize their innate inner potential or – and this is the current leading answer among those who defend education as something more than job-preparedness – to make them good citizens or active contributors to a democratic society. We'll examine all these answers and more.

The iPhone Course (Tolu Odumosu)

The “Jesus” phone, as the iPhone was affectionately dubbed at its inception, was released in June of 2007 and in various respects marked critical shifts in telephony, computing, internet access and the evolution of global telephony standards. In addition to basically inventing the “smartphone” category of mobile devices the iPhone is also the most successful product in Apple’s history and is in many ways, directly responsible for Apple’s rise and its becoming, literally, the most valuable company in the world. The launch of the iPhone also introduced a new kind of global consumption marked by infinite and raucous lines on launch day and the proliferation of “apps” and app stores. However, the rise and dominance of the iPhone has not been without controversy or challenge – most notably, the Android operating system and its affiliated ecosystem. This course will undertake a critical examination of the iPhone as a physical, social, cultural and economic artifact. What does it mean to say that the iPhone is an innovative product? Innovative in what way? What really goes into making an iPhone, and are iPhones sustainable? What about the global politics of iPhone sourcing and manufacturing? Why did it take so long for China to get the iPhone? What can the iPhone teach us about global software development and the making of telephony standards? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what can a critical study of the iPhone teach us about ourselves and how we consume and make meaning of the world in the 21st century? Find out more at <http://www.theiphoncourse.com>)

Emergencies (Jennifer Cyd Rubenstein)

What is an emergency? What sorts of situations are socially recognized as emergencies, and why? What situations should be recognized as emergencies? Ideas about what counts as an emergency, and assertions that particular situations are (or are not) emergencies, have an enormous impact on how resources (e.g. humanitarian aid) and attention (e.g. newspaper headlines) are allocated. Likewise, claims that particular situations are emergencies are frequently used to justify military intervention and/or exceptions to normal rules and procedures. The former concerns are taken up in the literatures in political and moral philosophy on “emergency ethics” and the “duty of rescue.” The latter concerns are taken up in the literature in political theory about “states of exception” and “emergency powers.” This course will bring these literatures into close

conversation with each other, in order to: 1) familiarize students with them; 2) enable students to develop the normative and critical tools necessary to analyze “emergency claims,” and 3) help students think more broadly and critically about the role of emergencies and “emergency thinking” in contemporary life. To this end, we will read work about emergencies written by political theorists, legal scholars, anthropologists, journalists, emergency-affected people, and others.

Charm School: Magical Arts & Sciences (Chip Tucker)

One reason magic has engrossed the Western mind this past half-millennium lies in the resistance it poses to modern ways of knowing. Seminal work in ethnography and the theory of culture; paradigm-defining work by historians of witchcraft; socio-political speculation on charisma; major works of drama, poetry, opera, fiction, cinema – all these branches of the ongoing project of enlightenment have, when not dispelling magic outright, repeatedly spelled magic out for intellectual apprehension. Yet, despite the presumptive “disenchantment” of the contemporary world, the arts and sciences we practice keep re-casting magic’s ancient spells afresh by new means and media. We’ll learn together about these manifestations of the modern will-to-knowledge and in passing about – who knows? –the theory and practice of the dark art itself.

The Digital Revolution and American Opportunity (Philip Zelikow)

Paragraph description: America is in the early stages of an economic and social revolution on a scale not seen in a hundred years. As in the past, Americans are struggling with how they can adapt older institutions not only to keep pace, but to create much more opportunity for everyone in this connected age. This seminar will analyze the possibilities and the emerging issues. To do this we must draw upon work in history, economics, business, education, technology, government, law, and more. Each student will select one of these topics for a research paper to be discussed with other seminar participants.