MALS  
Summer 2014  
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

☐ MALS 127: Independent Study & ☐ MALS 137: Thesis Research, are offered every term. Enrollment is determined based upon completion of prerequisites, and committee approval. Please see student handbook or Departmental Administrator for further details.

MALS 120: Summer Symposium, “National Security & Civil Rights”
Schedule: Wednesdays 4:00pm to 6:00pm

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MALS 130: Cultural Studies Research Methods
Instructor: Klaus J. Milich
Schedule: Thursdays 4:30pm to 7:30pm

Description:
Writing a research paper requires the knowledge of the scope, the genesis, and the methods of the discipline one is engaged in. The goal of this workshop is to make students aware of their own approaches to help them develop their own research projects. It will cover methods of practical implementation, skills and strategies to obtain better results in research and class performance. Apart from learning how to apply and integrate different genre such as excerpts, protocols, reports, summaries, or charts that help preparing a presentation, writing a paper, or finishing a thesis, discussions will address the following questions:

- What distinguishes scholarship from other forms of knowledge production (media, encyclopedias);
- What research means in the sciences and in the humanities, and how individual disciplines produce knowledge;
- What it means to read and write “critically;”
- How to distinguish “scientific facts,” from “producing meaning;”
- How to turn individual observations and experiences into viable scholarly projects and why framing the right question might be more important than the answer;
- How research strategies and different forms of systematic thinking might be helpful at working places outside the university and beyond scholarly projects.

In order to practice how to plan or carry out research and how to build an argument, students will be asked to bring in their own work in progress, be it an initial idea for a final paper, a proposal for an independent study, or a chapter of their thesis.

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MALS 213: Fiction – Short Story (CW)
Instructor: Alan Lelchuk
Schedule: Mondays 4:00pm to 7:00pm

Description:
This course is aimed at those with a special interest in creative writing. Writing experience is preferred, but is not a prerequisite, nor is it necessarily essential that the student know exactly what he or she wishes to focus on. What is required is a commitment to the imaginative exploration of experience and a serious desire to devote oneself to the writing process.
Emphasis will be placed on student work, but a large number of published stories and essays will be analyzed as well. Classes will be mostly discussions, with periodic lectures. The aim of the course is two-fold: to help the student understand literary writing from the writer's point of view, and to raise student prose to publishable level or nearly so.

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**MALS 281: The Art of Travel Writing (CW)**
Instructor: Barbara S. Kreiger
Schedule: Tuesdays 4:30pm to 7:30pm

Description:
This course is aimed at those with a special interest in travel writing, a subgenre of literary nonfiction. The focus will be on the construction of a narrative, the role of the narrator, and the development of themes. Writing experience is preferred, but is not a prerequisite. Class time will be devoted to both student and published work.

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**MALS 303: Latin America and the Caribbean: Race, Discourse and the Origin of the Americas (CS, GS, ID)**
Instructors: Raul Bueno and Keith Walker
Schedule: Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:00am to 11:00am

Description:
Trans-historical and trans-disciplinary, the primary activity of Race, Discourse and the Origins of the Americas will be a close-reading of representative images, letters, testimonies, novels, histories, poetry, films and essays from and about the Caribbean and Latin America. The Martinican writer Edouard Glissant asserts that the West is not in the west, rather the West is a project. Starting with a consideration of Columbus's "Letter to Santangel" and the reporter Caminha's letter from the Brazilian coast to the Portuguese King Manuel, through the European Enlightenment, the concept of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, one aim of this course is to delineate the vision, project and worldview at the origins of social, political and race discourse and tensions in the Americas today.

From early European accounts of "discovery" and early indigenous accounts of the Conquest, to Aime Cesaire's Discourse on Colonialism and the Guatemalan Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu's testimony on modern and internal colonization, to twenty-first century social and ethnic struggles, writings have justified or condemned the processes of colonization and globalization in the Americas. The course will focus on the challenges that beset attempts to define the dynamic New World socio-politico-economic cultural realities that constitute the Caribbean and Latin America.

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**MALS 365: Transnational American Studies**
Instructor: Heike Paul, Visiting Harris Professor
Schedule: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:30am to 1:30pm

Description:
This seminar will examine the ‘turn’ to the transnational in American Studies which has gained momentum in recent decades. We will analyse a range of scholarly texts in the field of American studies that have sought to establish the transnational perspective as a critical move beyond the confines of the US-American nation and its concomitant, exceptionalist myths, drawing attention to historical, cultural, and political entanglements and interdependencies of the US with Europe, the
other’ Americas, Africa, and Asia. The critical genealogy of the transnational begins with Randolph Bourne’s 1916 article “Trans-national America,” but the emphasis of this seminar will be on more recent proclamations and critical re-examinations of the transnational approach in the works of Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Amy Kaplan, Paul Gilroy, Lisa Lowe, Sophia McClennen, John Carlos Rowe, and Donald Pease. Important questions may be for example: What is at stake when we consider the US not as an autonomous entity but as part of a hemisphere or as part of a circum-Atlantic or circum-Pacific world? What happens when we focus on the contingency of its borders rather than on the putative certainties of its national core? In-depth case studies in this seminar will focus on three transnational fields of study and address (1.) the Black Atlantic as historical context and critical concept, (2.) Chinatowns as urban diasporic spaces within the US nation, and (3.) the geopolitical concept of ‘borderlands’ at the US-Mexico border.

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MALS 318: Cultural Studies (CS, I/D)
Instructors: Donald Pease and Patricia McKee
Schedule: Mondays/Wednesdays, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Description:
Perhaps because of its capacity to cut across social and political interests and transgress disciplinary boundaries, Cultural Studies has provoked highly contradictory descriptions of its politics and academic location. Cultural Studies has been described as the academic location where the politics of difference -- racial, sexual, economic, transnational -- can combine and be articulated in all of their theoretical complexity. It has also been depicted as an academic containment strategy designed to tame cultural otherness through the universalization of the “idea” of culture and the resistance to theory. In this course we shall analyze the work of scholars -- bell hooks, Douglas Crimp, Janice Radway, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Andrew Ross, Meaghan Morris, Elsbeth Probyn, Michael Warner, Rey Chow, Cornel west, Kobena Mercer, Judith Butler, among others -- who explicitly reflect upon the importance of conceptualizing and defining this diverse and often contentious enterprise. In addition to examining the social and institutional geneology of the field, we shall deploy disparate methodological practices developed within the field of Cultural Studies to analyze a range of cultural artifices including: film noir, television soap operas, rap music, Hollywood blockbusters, borderlands discourse, whiteness studies and postcolonial theory.

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MALS 361: Global Media and Culture (CS, GS, I/D)
Instructors: Ronald Edsforth and Joanne Devine, Skidmore College
Schedule: Mondays/Wednesdays 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Description:
This course provides students the opportunity to study, discuss, and write about global media and the transformation of cultures and relations between peoples since the 1980s. Although most historians argue that globalization is an old process that began with the establishment of inter-regional trade many centuries ago, they agree with other social scientists who see this most recent phase of globalization as qualitatively different from earlier stages of the process. The most important of these changes is the development and diffusion of new global media. Indeed it seems fair to say that what most people mean when they use the word “globalization” today would not exist without the new global media.

We begin the term by examining various conceptual discourses about the character and meaning of globalization, the media, and cultural change and survival. We then explore the recent rise of global media with special attention paid to technological innovations, transnational corporate consolidation, and political deregulation. In the second half of the term the seminar focuses its attention on more specific cases of the cultural impacts of the new global media in both rich and less developed countries.
Learning Objectives:
By the end of the term, students in the seminar should

a. have a basic understanding of the process of “globalization"

b. be able to identify the ways commerce, information, and culture interact in the current global era

c. understand the structure and influence of global media

d. be familiar with the economic and technological developments that promote the globalization of media

e. understand the controversies over the nature and meaning of the interaction between local cultures and global media and other global institutions

f. understand and be able to assess the claims that global media are producing transnational cultural values.

Seminar requirements:
This is not a lecture course. To be successful, all members of the seminar have to participate in discussions of course materials. Students are required to finish assigned readings and videos as preparation for in-class discussions. Readings include several required books, as well as articles that are available on-line. Videos include documentary and feature films on reserve at the Jones Media Center. Participation in discussion will count for 20% of the final grade.

Students will sharpen their critical understanding of the course materials by writing a series of short (1000 words) response essays. These essays will be due each Monday of the term. This writing component of the course will count for 80% of the final grade.

Legend:

(CW) Creative Writing
(GS) Globalization Studies
(CS) Cultural Studies
(I/D) Interdisciplinary