

College Scholars Program: Research Seminars for Academic Year 2019-2020

Fall 2019 Seminars

Extreme Virology

David Bernick (BME 122H)

GE: TA

TuTh, 09:50AM-11:25AM, PhysSciences 305

This research seminar explores life in extreme environments with an emphasis on the viruses that live there. The course integrates aspects of virology, molecular biology and computational biology. Our field study area will be the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, where we will investigate a high-salt extreme environment. We will use DNA extraction methods to find molecular evidence of the organisms that live there and we will describe the genetic content of viruses and the community living in those high-salt ponds. One major term project will be assigned and will include a written journal-style paper with in-class presentations of your work.

The Role of Higher Education in a Democratic Society

Faye Crosby (Cowell 138A)

GE: PE-H

W: 5:20-8:20, Cowell 225 (Cowell Senior Commons)

Distinguished Professor of Psychology and former Cowell Provost Faye Crosby will teach this seminar, limited in size to just ten students. This is a special opportunity to engage in deep thinking together in an exceptional space. The seminar will meet once a week in the Cowell Senior Commons room - a room decorated with art and equipped with sofas, conference table, sink and kettle. Shared snacking is intended as part of each class. The class is unique in both format and content. It will explore the role of higher education in society, consider the formation of UCSC and Cowell College in particular, and delve into the current conditions of higher education in America. Students who are interested in the course should email Professor Crosby to learn more about it and to receive instructor approval. She can be reached at: fjcrosby@ucsc.edu

Chinese Approaches to Human Values

Raoul Birnbaum (Cowell 84)

GE: CC

T-Th, 1:30-3:15, Cowell 216

What is a “good” life, and how can it be lived? What is success, and why bother? Who is a “good” person, a cultivated person, a civilized person, an admirable person? What are the attributes and activities of an excellent ruler? These questions and many more are addressed by a group of classic Chinese texts that consider a wide range of human values and present distinctive ways of thinking in and about the world, with particular concern for questions of

meaning (that is, what is important in human experience, and why). These classic texts are resolutely practical rather than simply theoretical, and their influence within Chinese cultural spheres remains strong today, despite drastic changes to historical and social circumstances. This seminar will explore some of these pivotal texts and their views about the very basics of human life. We also will look to how these values have been articulated within expressive arts: poetry, the visual sphere, etc. During the quarter, each student will engage in regular seminar discussion, prepare occasional brief response papers, and write a more extended analytical essay that considers an issue or a text in greater depth. Beyond thoughtful exposure to these materials and issues, the aim of the seminar is to foster the development of deeper and more incisive analytical reading and writing skills.

Theory and Practice of Field Studies

Mike Rotkin (Merrill 90)

GE: PR-S

TuTh 09:50AM-11:25AM, Merrill Acad 132

This research seminar will provide an opportunity to learn about Santa Cruz, California, its contemporary history, culture, and politics. This course is about social change and community organizing. This will be much more than an opportunity to simply volunteer in the local community. We will study how things have changed in Santa Cruz, which moved in a relatively brief period from being one of the most conservative communities in the United States to one of the most progressive. Students will learn through readings, lectures, discussions, and individual field experiences working with local service and political organizations. The course will be an opportunity to learn about qualitative, interdisciplinary social science research and will be a good way to prepare for on-going, thoughtful, and effective activism in Santa Cruz and elsewhere on a wide variety of issues.

Water Justice: Global Insights for a Critical Resource

Sheeva Melodie Sabati (CLNI 60)

GE: PE-E

TuTh 09:50AM-11:25AM, Soc Sci 1 153

Groundwater is a challenging resource to manage and conserve, one critically depleted across our state, country and world. This course will explore the many manifestations of groundwater access, use and justice on multiple interlocking scales (i.e. local, national, transnational) while illustrating analytical ideas connecting to a range of socio-environmental processes including urbanization and infrastructure development, deprivation and exclusion, privatization of land and water, and claims for human rights. We will draw from cases based on our multi-country research project that brings together scholars and practitioners from Latin America, Europe, Africa and South Asia. Students will have the opportunity to conduct qualitative and secondary research contributing to the California case study in the Central Coast, focused on groundwater governance and perspectives of Latinx farmworkers and residents.

Understanding Sustainability: Researching Environmental Justice at UCSC

Emily Murai (CLTE 60)

GE: PE-E

TuTh 01:30PM-03:05PM, Soc Sci 2 171

Sustainability is a central value in UCSC's identity as an institution, but what is meant by the term "sustainability" is complicated and culturally mediated. As such, sustainability efforts can perpetuate unjust dynamics and structures of power and privilege. This class draws from a multiyear research effort to examine disparities of sustainability experiences, perceptions and conceptions as they articulate with race, class, gender, campus position, etc. In this seminar we will explore the following questions through readings, discussions, and primary research on campus: What is sustainability? What assumptions about the relationships between humans and nature are privileged in these definitions? Who determines if a thing or a practice is sustainable and what are the implications of uneven claims to being able to represent sustainability?

Computational Futurology: Predicting Human Behavior and Activity

Peter Rothman (Crown 88)

GE: SR

TuTh 09:50AM-11:25AM, Merrill Acad 002

It is a commonly believed trope that human behavior is unpredictable or at least very difficult to predict, however there is a large body of scientific knowledge that suggests the contrary. Meanwhile, electronic surveillance and "big data" have given rise to predictive analytics and related technologies that claim to do exactly that. We will look at how to make and critique predictions and study our own predictability. We will study the use of powerful computational tools such as deep learning and quantum computing to make predictions of individual human actions as well as aggregate behavior of groups and organizations. We will study how individuals and organizations are using predictions to sell products and influence opinions, and perhaps even to control or topple governments and win elections. Finally, we will explore applications for good such as predictive urban environments that improve the safety and comfort of their residents by eliminating traffic congestion, anticipatory disaster responses, and methods for predicting and preventing war and other global existential risks.

Note: The research seminar will assume students are familiar with basic concepts of probability and have some exposure to computational methods such as spreadsheets and computer programming. Feel free to email the instructor (plrothma@ucsc.edu) for more information.

Creative and Social Entrepreneurship

Nada Miljkovic (Crown 92)

GE: PE-H

TuTh 03:20PM-04:55PM, Crown Clrm 203

This research seminar teaches students how to make societal impact through Social and Creative Entrepreneurship. Students are guided through the process of establishing a business to address a social or environmental problem and to direct their creative energy towards the most compatible and pressing community need. The class equips students with frameworks to identify their altruistic desires and creative passions, ascertain opportunities, form and sustain teams, and gain leadership skills. The class begins with students doing self-evaluations to understand their own personality types, values, strengths, and skills. Students form teams around a social need, develop a business plan, and choose an existing and similar case study to research. Each team is assigned a mentor that is an expert that relates to their business idea. Guest speakers and mentors will introduce various examples of Social and Creative Entrepreneurship.

Winter 2020 Seminars

Understanding our Nationalist Moment: Comparative and Historical Nationalisms in Contemporary Perspective

Kiva Silver (Stevenson 43)

GE: CC

TuTh 09:50AM-11:25AM, Cowell Conference Room

From the white nationalist demonstrations in the USA to Brexit and the resurgence of populist movements in India and Europe, nationalism is resurgent worldwide. How do we understand this resurgence of nationalism? Are we witnessing a return of tribalism or is nationalism in the age of globalization something new? In this course, we will explore key theories in the field of nationalism studies while examining a range of contemporary nationalist movements in a comparative, global perspective. Throughout the course, we will draw historical comparisons to earlier nationalist movements in order to understand our current moment of nationalist revival. We will also learn how to make use of UCSC's resources for conducting research in the humanities and social sciences. Using these resources and the course readings, students will conduct research into a current nationalist movement of their choice.

Manufactured Truth and Narratives of Power

Thomas Serres (POLI 117)

GE: IM

This seminar is an introduction to modern discursive techniques used to produce power, notably by manufacturing and distorting truth, from overt propaganda to public relations or advertising. Each week will focus on one framework used to frame reality, its related concepts, techniques and strategies as well as its economic, social or political objectives. Frameworks will include bureaucratic rationality, totalitarian propaganda, colonial mythology, state euphemism, "democratic" storytelling, conspiracy theories, branding, and green-washing. By drawing on visual and written primary sources, students will develop their ability to critically analyze and

identify various genres of truth production. They will also develop a toolkit to conduct research in a world saturated by fake news, and apply this to their own research project.

Art and Politics after Google

David Lau (Porter 90B)

GE: IM

This College Scholars seminar will explore the growing cultural significance of the Internet, which is ever more seamlessly integrated into everyday life. Using Astra Taylor's *The People's Platform* as a guide, we will move from the early-90s flowering of "information technology," to the dotcom bubble, from there to web 2.0 and social media, and up to the present post-financial crisis period of internet surveillance. Our class emphases will fall on the study of internet cultural history, contemporary forms of digital and installation art (Hito Steyerl, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Ricardo Dominguez), and they will also include video documentary (*In the Intense Now, Lo and Behold, The Square*), poetry (US – by the flarf collective and fellow travelers; Egypt – Maged Zaher; Russia – Kirill Medvedev and Pavel Arsenev), and a variety of web-based cultures (the alt-right for example). We will also examine Ben Lerner's novel *10:04*. The class will conclude with the study of the popular use of art, poetry, digital video, and social media in contemporary social protest movements. In addition to writing assignments, students will develop skills to realize an independent research project.

Business Entrepreneurship: Discovering and Launching a Startup

Nada Miljkovic (Crown 90)

GE: PR-C

Students in this research seminar will learn who their core and tertiary customers are, the marketing processes required for initial adoption and downstream sustainability, what data will be required by future partnerships and users, and core project management, financial, legal, and marketing resources needed for new companies. Students also learn to assess intellectual property and risk before they design/build as well as to identify financing and other key resources.

Spring 2020 Seminars

Storytelling/Professional Communication in a Digital Age

Kati Greaney (Crown 86)

GE: PR-C

In this research seminar students will get the opportunity to explore a variety of methods and approaches to telling stories through digital media. With the ever-changing landscape of social media, journalism and marketing, there is tremendous value in learning to create engaging and informative digital stories. In this course students will explore theories of narrative form, subjectivity, political and social engagement, and identity. We will look at a variety of methods and approaches to communicating effectively and reaching audiences. Students will have the

opportunity to develop, produce, and share a final capstone project using film, photo, audio, or mixed media methods. Additionally, there will be several guest speakers who specialize in a wide range of areas related to digital technology and storytelling.