University Courses

UNIV 0300. The Hispanic Experience in the United States.

This seminar will consider how Hispanics are transforming the United States even as they evolve as a people. We will discuss Hispanity as an ethnic and racial identity, debate the ethical dilemmas posed by undocumented immigration, the significance of the unprecedented geographic dispersal, and what the burgeoning second generation portends for the future contours of economic inequality. FYS

UNIV 0333. Contemplative Approaches to Living and Dying.

One of the central components of a religious tradition are beliefs about the meaning of human existence—a meaning that is constructed in relation to the significance of one's inevitable death, the nature of the afterlife, and conceptions of salvation. These core beliefs also deeply inform the ethics, rituals, and contemplative practices of religious communities. Through an investigation of four case studies, this course will explore how different religious traditions orient human life in relationship to a meaningful death. Particular emphasis will be placed on contemplative practices for skillful living and dying and on relating to death through rituals.

UNIV 0400. Beyond Narnia: The Literature of C.S. Lewis.

C.S. Lewis was one of the most widely read authors of the 20th Century, yet much of his philosophical, theological and political theories are unfamiliar. His fiction and philosophical writings will be explored to better understand his perspective on modern humanity, the relationship of man to family, the community and the state. C.S. Lewis had a very clear philosophy on the importance of the individual and how he relates to the larger social structures. Morality and the role of individuals as they interface with others around them and their responsibility for working with society both at community level and at the macro-state level will be explored.

Spr UNIV0400 S01 25442 F 3:00-5:30(15) (T. Flanigan)
Spr UNIV0400 S02 25443 W 3:00-5:30(14) (T. Flanigan)

UNIV 0456. Stages of the Contemplative Path.

One common metaphor for human life and self-transformation is the journey or the path. Contemplative traditions have also employed this image, offering both concise and expansive maps of the stages of practice and anticipated end goals of the contemplative life. The study of path structures allow us to carefully compare the relationship between specific cognitive, affective, and somatic practices, their resultant states and traits of human experience, and the meaning and value ascribed to them in different historical and cultural contexts.

UNIV 0480. Buddhist Ethical Theory.

Discussions of ethical questions in the classical Buddhist philosophical literature focus not only on how one should act, but also – perhaps more fundamentally – on which habits of mind and heart should be cultivated. In this course, students will (1) gain an understanding of Buddhist approaches to ethical questions, (2) learn to compare Buddhist approaches to ethical questions and ethical theorizing with prominent approaches in Western philosophy, and (3) examine whether and how classical Buddhist approaches to ethical questions might improve on and move toward contemporary discussions in the philosophical literature on ethics, and in society more broadly.

UNIV 0500. A Comparative Phenomenology of Mystical Experience.

Mystical experience – personal engagement with an ultimate reality – is found in virtually all cultures, in explicitly religious and deliberately secular guises. It has received extraordinarily diverse appraisals: some have acclaimed it “the only truth there is,” while others have been executed for asserting it. This course examines the nature of mystical experience and the variety of its manifestations in and out of the world’s major religious traditions. Students will read broadly in primary sources and engage two contemporary theoretical questions: Is mystical experience conditioned by exclusively socio-cultural factors? Is it possible to derive an ethic from mystical experience? Enrollment limited to 16.

UNIV 1000. Cognitive Neuroscience of Meditation.

The course will focus on the history and development of neuroscientific studies of meditation. We will examine the various technological innovations that drove this research, EEG, PET/IMRI, and MEG and the central scientific and philosophical challenges presented by it, including: the epistemological status of correlating subjective measures with brain function; the challenges of carrying out and analyzing data from a longitudinal meditation training study; the nature of neuroplasticity; how the brain’s default network is affected by meditation; the neural oscillatory correlates of attentional processes in meditation; the nature of mystical experience and the variety of its manifestations in and out of the world’s major religious traditions. Students will read broadly in primary sources and engage two contemporary theoretical questions: Is mystical experience conditioned by exclusively socio-cultural factors? Is it possible to derive an ethic from mystical experience? Enrollment limited to 16.

UNIV 1001. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Contested Narratives.

We will compare the radically different narratives that Palestinians and Israelis tell themselves and the world about their struggle over Palestine/Israel. Sources will include historical documents, memoirs, and accounts of the conflict by Israeli and Palestinian historians. We will read works of fiction and view films that present the story of the conflict from both perspectives. Attention will also be paid to efforts by Israelis and Palestinians to transcend their conflicting narratives and attain mutual understanding. All sources in English translation. DPLL LILE WRIT
UNIV 1100. Imagining an Equitable University.
The course studies moments over the past half century in which the University was faced with a need to be more inclusive, with an emphasis on issues of race and gender. Our goal is to create an alternative history of Brown that enables new voices to evaluate how the process of governance has worked. Participation by President Simmons depends on her availability. Interested students should apply using the application found at http://www.brown.edu/administration/presidential_seminar/ Applications are due by April 30th.

Considers the ethical tradition in the sciences, and the ways in which ethical issues are engaged in science. Readings and case study examples are drawn from a range of fields, including engineering, chemistry, physics, astronomy and the biological sciences. The seminar has been designated with NSF funding, and is being co-taught at Brown University, Zhejiang University in China and the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay. The three sections of this seminar will meet together to share international perspectives several times during the semester. Enrollment limited to 25. Not open to freshmen. LILE WRIT

UNIV 1400. The Cultural History of Disability Minorities in the United States.
Due to the efforts of people with disabilities to secure their civil rights, “disability” has begun to be perceived as a social identity and role rather than solely a medical condition. This course analyzes the cultural history of disability, giving attention to cross-cultural comparisons. Broad topics include: concepts of disability; disability and bioethics; images of disability in film, the media, art, and literature; and political movements of people with disabilities.

UNIV 1520. The Shaping of World Views.
To many students, an exclusive emphasis on specialized studies fragments the “world” in which they live. A widespread feeling of loss pervades the minds of students who often come to universities to learn right from wrong, to distinguish what is true from what is false, but who realize at the end of four years that they have deconstructed their freshman beliefs, values, and ideologies, but have created nothing to replace them. This course examines the diversity of worldviews both synchronically and diachronically and surveys various explanations for such diversity. Enrollment limited to 30. Conducted in English. WRIT

UNIV 1700. Transformation of the Research University.
This seminar will focus on recent transformations of the academic, instructional and administrative character of the elite American research universities. Emphasis will be on selected pressure points (such as research funding, diversity, technology, market influence) that drive change and shape the future.

Spr UNIV1520 S01 24712 MWF 2:00-2:50(07) (O. Almeida)
Spr UNIV1700 S01 25187 M 3:00-5:30(13) (W. Simmons)