

Big Problems

Department Website: <http://bigproblems.uchicago.edu>

The Big Problems courses that follow are among a growing number of capstone experiences offered as electives to fourth-year students in the College. Under special circumstances involving senior project needs, third-year students may petition for permission to register for a Big Problems course.

"Big problems" are characteristically matters of global or universal concern that intersect with several disciplines and affect a variety of interest groups. They are problems for which solutions are crucially important but not obviously available.

Big Problems courses emphasize process as well as content: learning how to creatively confront difficult intellectual and pragmatic problems wider than one's area or expertise and to consider how to deal with the uncertainty that results. This often points to the importance of working in groups. If the core curriculum provides a basis for learning and the majors develop more specialized knowledge, the Big Problems experience leads to the development of skills for thinking about and dealing with the important but unyielding issues of our time.

Big Problems courses encourage linkage to BA papers, research experiences, or internships. They use interdisciplinary team teaching, seeking to cross disciplines and divisions and to transcend familiar models of content, organization, and instruction.

Each year a Big Problems Lecture Series features outside speakers and additional workshops for interested students.

Big Problems Courses Offered in 2017–18

BPRO 22612. Medical Ethics: Central Topics. 100 Units.

Decisions about medical treatment, medical research, and medical policy often have profound moral implications. Taught by a philosopher, two physicians, and a medical lawyer, this course will examine such issues as paternalism, autonomy, assisted suicide, kidney markets, abortion, and research ethics.

Instructor(s): D. Brudney; Staff Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing. This course does not meet requirements for the Biological Sciences major.

Note(s): Undergrads enroll in sections 01 and 02. Graduates enroll in section 03. For Philosophy majors: This course fulfills the practical philosophy (A) requirement.

Equivalent Course(s): PHIL 21609, HIPS 21609, BIOS 29314, PHIL 31609

BPRO 22800. Drinking Alcohol: Social Problem or Normal Cultural Practice? 100 Units.

Alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive agent in the world, and, as archaeologists have recently demonstrated, it has a very long history dating back at least 9,000 years. This course will explore the issue of alcohol and drinking from a trans-disciplinary perspective. It will be co-taught by an anthropologist/archaeologist with experience in alcohol research and a neurobiologist who has experience with addiction research. Students will be confronted with literature on alcohol research from anthropology, sociology, history, biology, medicine, psychology, and public health and asked to think through the conflicts and contradictions. Selected case studies will be used to focus the discussion of broader theoretical concepts and competing perspectives introduced in the first part of the course. Topics for lectures and discussion include: What is alcohol? chemical definition, cultural forms, production processes, biological effects; The early history of alcohol: archaeological studies; Histories of drinking in ancient, medieval, and modern times; Alcohol and the political economy: trade, politics, regulation, resistance; Alcohol as a cultural artifact: the social roles of drinking; Styles of drinking and intoxication; Alcohol, addiction, and social problems: the interplay of biology, culture, and society; Alcohol and religion: integration vs. prohibition; Alcohol and health benefits: ancient beliefs and modern scientific research; Comparative case studies of drinking.

Instructor(s): M. Dietler, W. Green Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 25310, BIOS 02280

BPRO 23900. Biological and Cultural Evolution. 100 Units.

This course draws on readings in and case studies of language evolution, biological evolution, cognitive development and scaffolding, processes of socialization and formation of groups and institutions, and the history and philosophy of science and technology. We seek primarily to elaborate theory to understand and model processes of cultural evolution, while exploring analogies, differences, and relations to biological evolution. This has been a highly contentious area, and we examine why. We seek to evaluate what such a theory could reasonably cover and what it cannot.

Instructor(s): S. Mufwene, W. Wimsatt Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing or consent of instructor required; core background in evolution and genetics strongly recommended.

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major. CHDV Distribution: A

Equivalent Course(s): CHDV 23930, ANTH 28615, ANTH 38615, LING 11100, CHSS 37900, LING 39286, CHDV 33930, BIOS 29286, HIPS 23900, PHIL 22500, PHIL 32500, NCDV 27400

BPRO 26030. The Nuclear Age. 100 Units.

Seventy-five years ago a group of scientists launched the first sustained nuclear chain reaction, commonly known as CP-1, at the University of Chicago under Stagg Field. This course will be part of the commemoration and reflection taking place across the University this fall. Its goal will be to explore the ensuing Nuclear Age from different disciplinary perspectives by organizing a ring-lecture. Each week's lecture, delivered by faculty from fields across the university (for instance, Physics, Biomedicine, Anthropology, and English), will be followed by a discussion section to synthesize and integrate not only the material from the weekly lectures, but the many events happening at the University this fall. CP-1 was not only a scientific achievement of the highest magnitude, but also a civilization-changing event that remains at the boundary of the thinkable.

Instructor(s): D. L. Nelson Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Second, third, or fourth-year standing.

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 26030, SIGN 26031, HIST 25424

BPRO 28600. Health Care and the Limits of State Action. 100 Units.

In a time of great human mobility and weakening state frontiers, epidemic disease is able to travel fast and far, mutate in response to treatment, and defy the institutions invented to keep it under control: quarantine, the cordon sanitaire, immunization, and the management of populations. Public health services in many countries find themselves at a loss in dealing with these outbreaks of disease, a deficiency to which NGOs emerge as a response (an imperfect one to be sure). Through a series of readings in anthropology, sociology, ethics, medicine, and political science, we will attempt to reach an understanding of this crisis of both epidemiological technique and state legitimacy, and to sketch out options.

Instructor(s): E. Lyon, H. Saussy Terms Offered: Spring. May be offered in 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 28900, HMRT 28602, KNOW 27006, BIOS 29323

BPRO 28900. Inequality: Origins, Dimensions, and Policy. 100 Units.

For the last three decades, incomes in the United States and across the globe have grown more unequal. That fact has attracted worldwide attention from scholars, governments, religious figures, and public intellectuals. In this interdisciplinary course, participating faculty members drawn from across the University and invited guest speakers will trace and examine the sources and challenges of inequality and mobility in many of its dimensions, from economic, political, legal, biological, philosophical, public policy, and other perspectives. This course is part of the College Course Cluster, Inequality.

Instructor(s): A. Sanderson and Staff Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ECON 24720, PBPL 28920

BPRO 29000. Energy and Energy Policy. 100 Units.

This course shows how scientific constraints affect economic and other policy decisions regarding energy, what energy-based issues confront our society, how we may address them through both policy and scientific study, and how the policy and scientific aspects can and should interact. We address specific technologies, both those now in use and those under development, and the policy questions associated with each, as well as with more overarching aspects of energy policy that may affect several, perhaps many, technologies.

Instructor(s): S. Berry, G. Tolley Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing. For ECON majors who want ECON credit for this course (ECON 26800): PQ is ECON 20100.

Equivalent Course(s): CHSS 37502, ECON 26800, ENST 29000, PBPL 29000, PHPA 39201, PSMS 39000

BPRO 29200. Global Energy & Climate Challenge: Economics, Science & Policy. 100 Units.

The global energy and climate challenge is one of the most important and urgent problems society faces. Progress requires identifying approaches to ensure people have access to the inexpensive and reliable energy critical for human development, without causing disruptive climate change or unduly compromising health and the environment. The course pairs technical and economic analysis to develop an understanding of policy challenges in this area. Lecture topics will include the past, present, and future of energy supply and demand, global climate change, air pollution and its health consequences, selected energy technologies such as solar photovoltaics, nuclear power, unconventional oil and gas, and an analysis of theoretical and practical policy solutions in developed and emerging economies.

Instructor(s): M. Greenstone, J. Deutch Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing in the College.

Equivalent Course(s): ECON 26730, ENST 28220, PBPL 29200

Big Problems Courses Offered in Previous Years

Any of these courses may be offered in the future.

BPRO 21500. What Is Civic Knowledge? 100 Units.

What is civic knowledge? Although civic rights and duties are supposedly universal to all citizens in a "democratic" nation, their implementation often depends on the strength of community connections and the circulation of knowledge across racial, class, and social boundaries. Focusing on the city of Chicago, we ask how citizens (in their roles as citizens) forge communities, make urban plans, and participate in civic affairs. How does the city construct the public spheres of its residents? Are the social practices of Chicagoans truly "democratic"? Could they be? What does "Chicago" stand for, as a political and cultural symbol? For both Chicagoans and their representatives, the circulation of knowledge depends not only on conventional media but also on how the city is constructed and managed through digital media.

Instructor(s): R. Schultz, M. Browning. Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 22200. Boundaries, Modules, and Levels. 100 Units.

This course investigates conceptual problems arising in the attempt to analyze the structure of complex systems in a variety of biological, psychological, social, and technological contexts, and how the answers may vary with how the boundaries are drawn. We confront descriptive, critical, and normative puzzles arising from questions such as the following: Is a society just a collection of people, an organized collection of people, or something more? Can a corporation have rights and responsibilities? Can groups have identities? Why are minds in the head, or are they? And are genes the bearers of heredity?

Instructor(s): W. Wimsatt, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 22300. Empire. 100 Units.

Students in this course read a variety of texts (e.g., writings of Thucydides, Vergil, and Forster; documents from the caliphate of Andalusia; current articles). By viewing their own experiences in the light of Arab, British, Greek, and Roman empires, students reflect on America's role in the cultures and countries of the twenty-first century. Economics, language, culture, ecology, and social ethics may provide the lenses through which students view and review their experiences.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. Completion of the general education requirement in civilization studies through a College-sponsored study abroad program.

BPRO 22400. The Ugly American Comes Home. 100 Units.

The aims of this course are to interrogate not only the experience of studying abroad, but also the condition of coming "home" and facing a range of needs to assimilate and articulate your experience. We address being abroad and afterward through a range of reading materials, including travel writings, philosophies of education, and considerations of narrative and perception. Writing assignments will explicitly address the challenge of integrating study abroad with other forms of knowledge and experience that characterize collegiate education.

Instructor(s): J. Ketelaar, M. Merritt Terms Offered: Not offered in 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing; completion of a study abroad program (University of Chicago program, other institution's program, or self-structured program).

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 20001, INST 22400

BPRO 22500. Medicine and Society: Things, Bodies, and Persons. 100 Units.

This course explores ethically controversial topics in contemporary medicine (e.g., abortion, the right to die, genetic enhancement, role of religion in medicine). The course is team taught by faculty from medicine and philosophy. For each topic, we discuss current dilemmas that arise in clinical medicine and elucidate the moral basis for different responses to the dilemmas.

Instructor(s): D. Brudney, J. Lantos, A. Winter Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-18

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 22600. Autonomy and Medical Paternalism. 100 Units.

This course is an in-depth analysis of what we mean by autonomy and how that meaning might be changed in a medical context. In particular, we focus on the potential compromises created by serious illness in a person with decision-making capacity and the peculiar transformations in the meaning of autonomy created by advance directives and substituted judgment.

Instructor(s): D. Brudney, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 23000. Cosmos and Conscience: Looking for Ourselves Elsewhere. 100 Units.

Science and religion are two ways, among many others, that people can seek to know about reality: how do we construct ordered pictures of the whole—cosmos or civilization—and how do we relate to them in terms of action? How do we know what we do not know, and what does that kind of "knowledge" mean for the orientation and direction of human existence? How would cultural biases be affected by knowing that there are others "out there" in the universe, should we discover them? From various perspectives, this course addresses these questions of the origins, structures, and ends of reality as we look for ourselves—seek understanding of the human condition—in the cosmos but also in complex religious and cultural traditions. Whereas in our popular culture, science is often identified with the realm of knowledge and religion is simply "belief" or "practice," the course also seeks to trace the rational limits of science and the rational force of religion with respect to the ethical problem of the right and good conduct of human life.

Instructor(s): W. Schweiker, D. York Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 23220. The Politics and Psychology of Language. 100 Units.

Language is a semiotic system based on difference, and humans use it to differentiate and divide, but also to identify and unite. This course draws on a broad range of writing on language—anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, psychoanalysis and psychology—to explore the social meaning of language in relation to individuals, groups and societies. We will investigate such topics as hate speech, political correctness, language and thought, accent discrimination, language change, and language ideologies.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or Fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 27210, CHDV 23220, LING 23220, PSYC 23220

BPRO 23400. Is Development Sustainable? 100 Units.

This discussion course grapples with the "big problem" of sustainable development. We analyze problematical issues underlying population growth, resource use, environmental transformation, and the plight of developing nations through a consideration of economic, political, scientific, and cultural institutions and processes. Since the very concept of development in modern societies is correlated with increasingly intensive use of environmental energy resources, the course will also address questions concerning the sustainability of energy systems as an underlying theme.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not offered in 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): Background in environmental issues not required

BPRO 23500. The Organization of Knowledge. 100 Units.

This course explores several structures of knowledge that students may have encountered in their core and specialized education, with the goal of enabling students to identify and explore the implications of these different structures. We ask whether all knowledge is relative, and if so, to what? When things are structured differently, does that mean that knowledge is lost? Or are there several diverse ways of structuring knowledge, each of which may be viable? We read a wide range of classical and modern thinkers in various disciplines.

Instructor(s): W. Sterner, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 23600. Social Context, Biology, and Health. 100 Units.

We take for granted our relationships with other people as fundamental. Yet when these connections are absent or disrupted, our minds and biology are likewise disrupted. Epidemiological studies have now clearly established a relationship between social isolation and both mental and physical health. This course adopts an integrative interdisciplinary approach that spans the biological to sociological levels of analysis to explore the interactions involved and possible mechanisms by which the social world gets under the skin to affect the mind, brain, biology, and health.

Instructor(s): J. Cacioppo, M. McClintock, L. Waite Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 23760. The Social Brain: Social Isolation and Loneliness. 100 Units.

The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable rise in the number of investigations published on the social brain. The discoveries conveyed by the titles of many of these reports (e.g., the neural basis of love, altruism, morality, generosity, trust) have piqued the interest of young investigators, funding agencies, the media, and laypeople alike. Such attention is a double-edged sword, however, as errors are exaggerated in importance, and oversimplifications create false expectations and, ultimately, disillusionment in what the field can contribute. It is, of course, one thing to assume that neural processes underlie all psychological phenomenon, it is another to claim that a given brain region is the biological instantiation of complex psychological functions like the self, empathy or loneliness. The purpose of this course is to examine opportunities and challenges in this field primarily through research on two of the most important topics in the field: social isolation and empathy.

Instructor(s): J. Cacioppo, L. Hawkley Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet the requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 23800. The Affect System. 100 Units.

The term "affect" typically refers to feelings beyond those of the traditional senses, with an emphasis on the experience of emotions and variations in hedonic tone. The structure and processes underlying mental contents are not readily apparent, however, and most cognitive processes occur unconsciously with only selected outcomes reaching awareness. Over millions of years of evolution, efficient and manifold mechanisms have evolved for differentiating hostile from hospitable stimuli and for organizing adaptive responses to these stimuli. These are critically important functions for the evolution of mammals, and the integrated set of mechanisms that serve these functions can be thought of as an "affect system." It is this affect system—its architecture and operating characteristics, as viewed from neural, psychological, social, and political perspectives—that is the focus of the course.

Instructor(s): J. Cacioppo, E. Oliver, S. Cacioppo Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24000. Understanding Wisdom. 100 Units.

Thinking about the nature of wisdom goes back to the Greek philosophers and the classical religious sages, but the concept of wisdom has changed in many ways over the history of thought. While wisdom has received less scholarly attention in modern times, it has recently re-emerged in popular discourse with a growing recognition of its potential importance for addressing complex issues in many domains. But what is wisdom? It's often used with a meaning more akin to "smart" or "clever." Is it just vast knowledge? This course will examine the nature of wisdom—how it has been defined, how its meaning has changed, and what its essential components might be. We will examine how current psychological theories conceptualize wisdom and consider whether, and how, wisdom can be studied scientifically; that is, can wisdom be measured and experimentally manipulated to illuminate its underlying mechanisms and understand its functions? Finally, we will explore how concepts of wisdom can be applied in business, education, medicine, the law, and in the course of our everyday lives. Readings will be drawn from a wide array of disciplines including philosophy, classics, history, psychology, behavioral economics, medicine, and public policy.

Instructor(s): A. Henly Terms Offered: Not offered in 2017-18

Note(s): See PSYC 24055 The Psychological Foundations of Wisdom offered Spring 2018.

Equivalent Course(s): PSYC 24050

BPRO 24100. Science and Religion. 100 Units.

In this course, we explore some aspects of the relations between science and religion in Western culture (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Islamic). Questions include: What are science and religion? Are they competing intellectual systems for making sense of the world? What are social institutions? Can they be in conflict with one another? Can they support one another? Each of the instructors treats these questions by examining certain historical episodes and texts to add different perspectives to the material.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24150. Romantic Love: Cultural, Philosophical, and Psychological Aspects. 100 Units.

This double-credit course combines humanistic and social scientific disciplines to examine the phenomenon of romantic love—a “big problem” in practical, theoretical, and cultural senses. The course starts by comparing representations of romantic love experiences in visual, musical and literary arts and myths. After exploring what may be specific to this form of love, we address two further issues: the role and sources of non-rational experience in romantic love, and the role of romantic love in modern marriage. Illumination of these topics is sought through the discussion of humanistic and social scientific texts and cinematic presentations.

Instructor(s): D. Orlinsky, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): The class meets for six hours a week.

BPRO 24160. Love and Tragedy in Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina. 100 Units.

Tolstoy’s great novel *Anna Karenina* may be the finest and most compelling depiction in literature of the diverse aspects and outcomes of romantic love. Combining humanistic and social scientific perspectives, this course undertakes an intensive study of the novel to examine the joys and sorrows of romantic love, and the successes and tragedies that follow from it, as well as the aesthetic achievement of the novel as a major work of art. Resources for understanding the development of the novel’s characters and the fate of their relationships are drawn from Freud’s *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* and other works. Bases for a critical appreciation of the novel are drawn from Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Instructor(s): D. Orlinsky, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24200. Psychoneuroimmunology: Links between the Nervous and Immune Systems. 100 Units.

This course covers all aspects of neuroimmunoendocrinology at the molecular, cellular, and organismal and social levels.

Instructor(s): M. McClintock, J. Quintans Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing, and BIOS 20180s or 20190s

Note(s): This course meets requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 24300. Globalization and Neo-Liberalism. 100 Units.

Developments over the past decade have led a number of former leading enthusiasts of globalization to raise basic criticisms of the neo-liberal paradigm. In doing this, they have echoed and drawn attention to the results of economists and historians whose work undercuts the basic premises of neo-liberalism. This course explicates a varied collection of this work, viewed as a critique and alternative to neo-liberalism, by economic historians (e.g., Hobsbawm, Williams, Arrighi, Polanyi) and economists (e.g., Palley, Taylor, Stretton, Marglin, Eatwell, MacEwan, Blecker, Brenner).

Instructor(s): M. Rothenberg, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24400. Concepts of the Self from Antiquity to the Present. 100 Units.

This seminar explores the evolution of ideas about the nature and formation of selfhood from classical antiquity to the present. Along the way, we look at Greek tragedy, Stoic philosophy, early Christian texts, and the conceptual models of selfhood and self-understanding behind Descartes, Kant, Freud, Foucault, and others. Students should be prepared to deal extensively with scholarship on self, ethics, and community across the fields of philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and social history.

Instructor(s): S. Bartsch, J. Goldstein Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24500. Language and Globalization. 100 Units.

Distinguishing myths from facts, this course articulates the different meanings of globalization, anchors them in a long history of socioeconomic colonization, and highlights the specific ways in which the phenomena it names have affected the structures and vitalities of languages around the world. We learn about the dynamics of population contact and their impact on the evolution of languages.

Instructor(s): S. Mufwene, W. Wimsatt Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24600. Moments in Atheism. 100 Units.

Atheism is as old as religion. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so has the standing and philosophical justification for non-belief. This course examines the intellectual and cultural history of atheism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. We are concerned with the evolution of arguments for a non-religious worldview, as well as with the attitude of society toward atheism and atheists.

Instructor(s): S. Bartsch, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24700. From Neo-Liberalism to Neo-Imperialism. 100 Units.

This course examines the thesis advanced by a number of recent thinkers on the organic ties between neo-liberal doctrine and the rise of a new imperialism. In *False Dawn*, noted conservative political theorist John Gray gives a critique of the global free market. In *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*, two important left critics, economists Gerard Dumenil and Dominique Levy, investigate the economic roots of neo-liberalism. Finally, in reading two recent works by the economic geographer David Harvey (*A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism and The New Imperialism*) we consider in depth the link between neo-liberalism and imperialism.

Instructor(s): M. Rothenberg, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24800. The Complex Problem of World Hunger. 100 Units.

Few of our policymakers are experts in economics, agronomy, food science, and molecular biology, yet all of these disciplines are essential for developing strategies to end world hunger. Choosing one country as a test case, we look at the history, politics, governmental structure, population demographics, and agricultural challenges. We then study the theory of world markets, global trade, and microeconomics of developing nations, as well as the promise and limitation of traditional breeding and biotechnology.

Instructor(s): J. Malamy, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 24900. Biology and Sociology of AIDS. 100 Units.

This co-listed course explores the biology and sociology of AIDS from interdisciplinary perspectives. Roughly half of the course explores the basic biology of the HIV retrovirus, HIV treatments such as HAART medications, opportunities and obstacles to effective HIV vaccines, the epidemiology of HIV infection. The remainder of course sessions explore social, political, and policy concerns: HIV risk behaviors, clinical and policy interventions in HIV prevention, public policies that finance HIV care, the challenge of global HIV treatment and prevention, with a special focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The course features guest speakers who are leading experts in these areas.

Instructor(s): H. Pollack, J. Schneider Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

Equivalent Course(s): BIOS 02490

BPRO 25000. Images of Time: Japanese History through Film. 100 Units.

Focusing attention on the emerging nexus between audio-visual and historical studies, this course deals with theories of time, history, and representation while making those ideas and problems concrete through a study of the way in which history in Japan has been mediated by the cinema. A close reading of a wide range of films produced in and about Japan in tandem with primary and secondary materials on theories of time, images, and national history highlights the historicity and history of both film and Japan. All work in English.

Instructor(s): J. Ketelaar, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing required; knowledge of Japanese not required.

BPRO 25100. Evolutionary Theory and Its Role in the Human Sciences. 100 Units.

The course's aim is two-fold: (1) an examination of the origins and development of Darwin's theory from the early nineteenth century to the present; and (2) a selective investigation of the ways various disciplines of the human sciences (i.e., sociology, psychology, anthropology, ethics, politics, economics) have used evolutionary ideas.

Instructor(s): R. Richards, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 25200. Body and Soul: Approaches to Prayer. 100 Units.

Why do we pray? Why do we experience prayer practice as reaching out towards an intentional being whom we cannot (except in representation) touch, see, or hear? This course approaches an answer to that question by looking at the way we pray, particularly in a Christian context. What kinds of bodily engagement do we find in prayer; what impact might prayer practice have upon our bodies; what bodily features of prayer might help to explain why its practice has been so compelling to so many for so many years?

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 25300. Utopias. 100 Units.

This course surveys significant moments in utopian practice, choosing case studies from among Plato's *Republic*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, national experiments, utopian communities, socialism, technophilia, new social movements, radical conservatism, and fundamentalisms. We focus on literature and art (e.g., music, painting, architecture and urbanism, film and digital media).

Instructor(s): L. Berlant, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 25400. Jews and Christians in the Middle East. 100 Units.

Minorities around the world today invite questions about the prospects of pluralism and tolerance in modern societies. This course will explore these long-studied questions by examining the case of Jews and Christians in the Middle East, as well as its tangled histories with Muslims and Jews in Mediterranean Europe. Co-taught by a historian of Jews in Iraq and an anthropologist of Copts in Egypt, we will explore histories and ethnographies to consider the political, social, and religious dimensions of minority communities. Our syllabus also blends various literary genres and forms of media with academic scholarship to explore various voices in the conversation about Jews and Christians in the Middle East—from novels, films, and poetry to theological tracts and political treatises. We raise the following questions throughout our course: What terms for coexistence have governed Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean? How are religious practices and traditions linked to histories of rule? How do ideologies (e.g., nationalism, secularism, communism) shape the way minorities understand themselves and how society understands them?

Instructor(s): O. Bashkin, A. Heo Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 26215, NEHC 20585, RLST 20231

BPRO 25500. Art and Human Rights. 100 Units.

This seminar-style course will explore historical and contemporary interventions in visual and performative artistic practices with human rights. Co-taught by a historian and theater-maker, the course will consider various paradigms for looking at how artists work on human rights. Course work will include critical readings, viewings of artistic work, and direct conversations with artists. Students will also participate in a multi-day summit on campus (April 29-May 2) that will bring distinguished artists from throughout the world to address the question “What is an artistic practice of human rights, conceptually, aesthetically and pragmatically?” Students will be given the option to produce either an academic or artistic final project.

Instructor(s): M. Bradley, L. Buxbaum Danzig Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Equivalent Course(s): ARTV 20009, HIST 29906, HMRT 25502, TAPS 25510

BPRO 26050. Memory, Commemoration, and Mourning. 100 Units.

This course focuses on the manner in which we make use of the past, the personal past, the collective past, and the place of social and historical change in retelling and rewriting life-history and history. The course begins with a discussion of memory, conceptions of the personal and historic past, and such related issues as nostalgia, mourning, and the significance of commemoration in monument and ritual. These issues are explored in a number of topics such as twentieth-century war memorials, high school and college reunions, and the Holocaust and its representation in contemporary European society.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26102. War. 100 Units.

In this course, we ask such questions as: Why do humans go to war? What is the experience of war like? How does war affect the individual and his society? What is a just war? An unjust war? Can we conceive of a world without war? We read and discuss texts such as Homer’s *The Iliad*, Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Jonathan Shay’s *Achilles in Vietnam*, and Glen Gray’s *The Warriors*. The readings serve primarily as a starting point for the discussion of the above questions and any other issues raised by the class that are related to war.

Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26300. Globalization: History and Theory. 100 Units.

This course makes sense of globalization as a historical phenomenon focusing primarily on the long twentieth century, but with a look back into the “deep history” of the making of the contemporary world. While the course has a theoretical bent, it should be taken as an introduction into modern history. It has three goals in particular: (1) It introduces the main concepts and theories of globalization. (2) It explores key moments, processes, and events in the annals of globalization. (3) It highlights the nature of contentions over the terms of global order.

Instructor(s): M. Geyer, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26400. Movies and Madness. 100 Units.

We propose to investigate representations of madness in fictional, documentary, and experimental film. We divide the topic this way to emphasize the different dimensions of cinematic address to questions of mental illness, and the ways that film genres imply distinct formal and epistemological conventions for the representation of insanity. Documentary ranges from instructional and neutral reportage, to polemical, essayistic interventions in the politics of psychiatry and the asylum, the actual conditions of mental illness in real historical moments. Documentary also includes the tendency in new media for “the mad” to represent themselves in a variety of media. With experimental film, our aim will be to explore the ways that the cinematic medium can simulate experiences of mania, delirium, hallucination, obsession, depression, etc., inserting the spectator into the subject position of madness. We will explore the ways that film techniques such as shot-matching, voice-over, montage, and special effects of audio-visual manipulation function to convey dream sequences, altered states of consciousness, ideational or perceptual paradoxes, and extreme emotional states. Finally, narrative film we think of as potentially synthesizing these two strands of cinematic practice, weaving representations of actual, possible, or probable situations with the special effects of mad subjectivity.

Instructor(s): W. J. T. Mitchell, J. Hoffman Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26500. Picturing Words/Writing Images (Studio) 100 Units.

What is the relationship between reading and looking? Images in mind and images on paper—words in mind and on the page—we will explore the intersection of these different ways to think, read, and look, as we make poems, drawings, paintings, etc., in class. We will investigate the problem of representing language as it is expressed in the work produced in class. Studying works by contemporary visual artists like Jenny Holzer and Ann Hamilton, and practicing poets such as Susan Howe and Tom Phillips will inform our investigation. The course will feature visits to our studio by contemporary poets and visual artists, who will provide critiques of student work and discussion of their own ongoing projects. These visitors will help to frame our artistic and literary practice within the ongoing conversation between word and image in modern culture. We will ask, what are the cognitive, phenomenological, social, and aesthetic consequences of foregrounding the pictorial/visual aspect of alphabetical characters? (C, H)

Instructor(s): J. Stockholder, S. Reddy Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. Previous experience in an arts studio or creative writing course recommended, but not required.

BPRO 26600. Antonioni's Films: Reality and Ambiguity. 100 Units.

In this in-depth study of several Antonioni films, our eye is on understanding his view of reality and the elements of ambiguity that pervade all of his films. Together, as a film scholar and physicist, we bring out these aspects of his work together with his unique cinematic contributions. This course introduces students to this poet of the cinema and the relevance of Antonioni's themes to their own studies and their own lives.

Instructor(s): Y. Tsivian, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26700. Mythical History, Paradigmatic Figures: Caesar, Augustus, Charlemagne, Napoleon. 100 Units.

What is the process by which some historical figures take on mythical proportions? This course examines four case studies of conquerors who attained sovereign power in times of war (conquest, civil war, revolution), who had a foundational role in empire-building, and who consciously strove to link themselves to the divine and transcendent. Their immense but ambiguous legacies persist to this day. Although each is distinct as a historical individual, taken together they merge to form a paradigm of the exceptional leader of epic proportions. Each models himself on exemplary predecessors: each invokes and reinvents myths of origin and projects himself as a model for the future. Basic themes entail mythic history, empire, the exceptional figure, modernity's fascination with antiquity, and the paradox of the imitability of the inimitable.

Instructor(s): M. Lowrie, R. Morrissey Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 26750. Anxiety. 100 Units.

The phenomenon of anxiety emerged as one of the leading psychological disorders of the 20th and 21st centuries. Worrying ourselves into the realm of the pathological, we now have a requisite measure of anxiety for every prescribed stage of life. But why are we so anxious? Considering its prevalence in everyday life, the concept and theories of anxiety have been employed surprisingly seldom as a way into film, fiction, and art. In this course we examine the modern origin of contemporary discourses specific to anxiety and their unique manifestation in cultural artifacts. To understand the complex of anxiety in the so-called Western world, we rely on the theories of Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Alenka Zupančič; fiction by Stoker, Schnitzler, Kafka, and Sebald; and film by Haneke, Kubrick, Ophüls, and Hitchcock. We will also have guest speakers from the fields of clinical psychiatry, geriatric medicine, philosophy, and comparative anthropology.

Instructor(s): M. Sternstein, A. Flannery Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): English majors: This course fulfills the Theory (H) distribution requirement.

Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 24260, GRMN 26715, MAPH 36750

BPRO 27000. Perspectives on Imaging. 100 Units.

Taught by an imaging scientist and an art historian, this course explores scientific, artistic, and cultural aspects of imaging from the earliest attempts to enhance and capture visual stimuli through the emergence of virtual reality systems in the late twentieth century. Topics include the development of early optical instruments (e.g., microscopes, telescopes), the invention of linear perspective, the discovery of means to visualize the invisible within the body, and the recent emergence of new media. We also consider the problem of instrumentally mediated seeing in the arts and sciences and its social implications for our image-saturated contemporary world.

Instructor(s): P. La Riviere, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 27500. The Origins and Consequences of Differences in Human Capabilities. 100 Units.

This course investigates the neurological, psychological, social, and economic consequences of early deprivation.

Instructor(s): J. Heckman, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 27600. Creation and Creativity. 100 Units.

This seminar explores several creation stories from anthropological, literary, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. We compare the accounts of the beginning in Genesis, Hesiod's *Theogony*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bhagavad Gita, the Maya's *Popol Vuh*, and other sources, including Native American ones. We explore the ways cosmic creation has been imagined in world culture. We also delineate human literary creativity and ask about the relationship between individual creativity and the cultural myths of creation. We consider at least one modern theory of the beginning of the universe.

Instructor(s): P. Friedrich, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 28000. Terror, Religion, and Aesthetics. 100 Units.

Through our contemporary experiences of terrorist acts, we apprehend the no-citizens' land of life without a social contract, of the violent "state of nature" among people. In varied genres (e.g., poems, plays, novels, memoirs, essays), we engage with the transformative powers of diverse aesthetics (e.g., catharsis, the sublime, theatre of cruelty, realism, fable, satire) and of religious faiths (e.g., deism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Sufism, Buddhism) to counteract terror and redeploy our civil status in society.

Instructor(s): M. Browning, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 28100. What Is Enlightenment? 100 Units.

What is enlightenment? How does one become enlightened, and who is enlightened? In Euro-American civilization, the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment championed the powers of human reason against religion and superstition to achieve scientific progress. Buddhism in the nineteenth century was represented by the heirs of Enlightenment as a religion for the Enlightenment to the point of not being a religion at all. Both traditions offer pathways to freedom (or liberation?) that draw on our rational capabilities, and both sponsor the production of knowledge that re-vision our place in the world. But they seem to be opposed: how could reason reject "religious" beliefs but also take part in "religious" traditions that aim to bring certain kinds of persons into being? We compare the mental models, discourses, methods of analysis, world-images, and practices of these traditions of enlightenment to assess the kinds of disciplines that their theoreticians and practitioners acquire and use.

Instructor(s): M. Browning, Staff Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 28500. Sex and Ethics. 100 Units.

Sex is a big problem. How do we think about sex in proximity to considering the ethics of risk, harm, and the potential for good? Developing an account specifically of an ethics of sex requires thinking about the place of sex and sexual vulnerability in social life with an eye toward understanding what's good and what might count as abuses, violations, disruptions, or deprivations of specifically good things about sex. In popular discussion, for example, "consent" often demarcates ethically good sex from bad sex. This course inquires whether consent is an adequate metric for sexual ethics; if it is necessary or sufficient; if certain factors (e.g., age, gender, violence) vitiate its normative force; and whether its legal definition conflicts, coheres with, or contributes to its general cultural reception. These issues require us to think about the ways people do, do not, and cannot know what they're doing in sex, and complicate the aspiration to have an ethics in proximity to sex. This year's version of the course focuses on political theory/policy/popular scandal in relation to aesthetics and sex theory archives. We talk about sex in proximity to modes of comportment in love, scandal, prostitution, stranger intimacy, political freedom and discipline, impersonality, and experimentality.

Instructor(s): L. Berlant, Staff Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

BPRO 28700. Alternate Reality Games: Theory and Production. 100 Units.

This experimental course explores the emerging genre of "alternate reality" or "transmedia" gaming. Throughout the quarter, we will approach new media theory through the history, aesthetics, and design of transmedia games. For all of their novelty, these games build on the narrative strategies of novels, the performative role-playing of theater, the branching techniques of electronic literature, the procedural qualities of videogames, and the team dynamics of sports. Beyond the subject matter, this course is a springboard for transforming the 2017 orientation for the incoming class of approximately 1,500 first-year students into an alternate reality game. Students in this course, thus, will not only be learning how to design a game but also contributing directly to the research and construction of this large-scale project. Building on this interdisciplinary research, we intend to design the University of Chicago orientation as a game that might help undergraduate students acclimate to the University setting and develop capacities linked to collaboration, leadership, and twenty-first century literacies. In particular, we are interested in discovering how interactive and participatory learning methods might help University students discuss and better understand complicated issues of inclusivity, diversity, and safety. Instructor consent is required. To apply, see prerequisite below. Once given consent, attendance on first day is mandatory.

Instructor(s): P. Jagoda, H. Coleman Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing. Instructor consent required. To apply, submit writing through online form at <http://bigproblems.uchicago.edu>; see course description. Once given consent, attendance on the first day is mandatory. Questions: mb31@uchicago.edu.

Note(s): English majors; this course fulfills the Theory (H) distribution requirement.

Equivalent Course(s): ARTV 20700, ARTV 30700, ENGL 25970, ENGL 32314, TAPS 28466, CMST 25954, CMST 35954

BPRO 29100. What Do the Genomes Teach Us about Evolution? 100 Units.

The twenty-first century opened with publication of the draft human genome sequence, and there are currently over 3,000 species whose genomes have been sequenced. This rapidly growing database constitutes a test of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories about evolution and a source of insights for new theories. We discuss what genome sequences have to teach us about the relatedness of living organisms, the diversity of cellular life, mechanisms of genome change over evolutionary time, and the nature of key events in the history of life on earth. The scientific issues are related to the history of evolutionary thought and current public controversies about evolution.

Instructor(s): J. Shapiro, M. Long Terms Offered: Not offered 2017-2018

Prerequisite(s): Third- or fourth-year standing

Note(s): This course does not meet requirements for the biological sciences major.

BPRO 29660. History Colloquium: Digital Humanities/Digital History. 100 Units.

This course will be an interdisciplinary introduction to digital humanities broadly writ with an emphasis on literary and historical developments over long periods of time (*longue durée*), and across large textual, cultural, and archival databases. Questions we will address include how do we constitute and navigate these collections? How do we conceive of digital tools in ways that speak to humanists and humanistic social scientists? How do we incorporate these tools and approaches into discursive argumentation and other traditional humanistic and historical modes of inquiry. No technical background is required, but basic computer skills and reading knowledge of French would be welcome. History concentrators may direct their coursework in this class toward the completion of a pre-BA essay for the major using primary sources.

Instructor(s): C. Gladstone, R. Morrissey, J. Sparrow Terms Offered: Not Offered 2017-2018

Note(s): History majors must take a History colloquium in their third year.

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 39661, FREN 29661, FREN 39661, HIST 29661



Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.