PACS 002

8:00 Mass Media and Popular Culture

This course introduces students to the field of mass media and cultural studies. The course is designed to help students develop an ability to look critically at messages of mass media including television, radio, internet, movies, and documentary as well as media dependents such as advertising. The central focus of the course is on examining how mass media messages play a role in our lives. Students will also be introduced to mass media theories and the impacts of new media. The course has the following learning objectives:

1) Understanding the American mass media and their powerful effects
2) Understanding the relationships between mass media and American culture
3) Developing critical thinking ability of analyzing media messages
4) Developing critical writing ability of analyzing media messages

8:00 Technology and Society

This course explores the symbiosis of our society and technology—the origins of major technological developments and their impact on society, history and culture. Technological developments in ancient, medieval, and modern times are considered with respect to such areas as power and energy, materials, machinery, agriculture, transportation, human health, and communication. Students will read essays on intellectual viewpoints of our technology and society by world-renowned presidents, scientists, intellectuals, attorneys and corporate leaders. The course has the following learning objectives:

1) To teach students the circumstances, people, and events that led to the development of modern technology.
2) To provide a history of people and technology, i.e., to provide students an understanding of how we got here.
3) To explain the effects of technology on our society and society’s effects on technological developments.
4) To provide students an understanding of some of the most technological things we currently use.

8:00 (Honors) The Pursuit of Happiness

While stated as a fundamental objective in The Declaration of Independence, happiness for many remains an elusive goal. Students in this course will explore both private and public happiness by looking briefly at history, examining recent research work in fields ranging from psychology to economics, observing current social trends, and reading several forms of literature. Through this study, we will explore ways individuals can maximize happiness by means of self-knowledge, love, optimism, gratitude, virtue, better uses of time, meaningful work, play, and public life. What sorts of social policies should come out of these? In turn, how does social policy itself contribute to unhappiness and/or happiness? Beginning with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, we will discuss the framework
for a personally happy and meaningful life. Ending with Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex, we will affirm the connection between self-knowledge and the common good as enacted in public ritual. In addition to the reading, students will keep a personal “happiness” journal, will write a “self-analysis” paper based on their journals, and will ultimately create a research paper aimed at redesigning an aspect of contemporary society in order to maximize happiness. The thematic connection to Pacific Seminar I is primarily to private life and civil society, but there are also connections to education and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

8:00 Lifeways for a Changing World

Undergraduates beginning their university studies have successfully mastered the priorities and practices of contemporary education in the United States. They can be expected to bring those same perspectives and skills to their gradual mastery of their chosen disciplines, and then carry them on into their future careers. This poses a problem. The values and assumptions of the global modern industrial world embedded in our education system are directly implicated in the pattern of worldwide ecological crisis confronting human civilization and all other life on Earth in the 21st century. For those concerned about the future, the wisdom of the world’s indigenous peoples, arising from a cosmology of interrelatedness and rooted in an intimate knowledge of place, is emerging as an indispensable source of hope in the search for ways to transform humanity’s presence in and to our planetary home. This course will explore living Native American traditions of learning and teaching as a means of engaging and supporting students in a process of inquiry and reflection toward a new understanding of their personal and shared place in an endangered world and an expanded understanding of their previous, current and continuing education. The instructor specializes in the mutually transformative integration of “traditional” and “modern” curricula, with many years of Indian Education program development experience in tribal and public schools.

8:00 Beatniks, Hippies, and Cool

This course investigates the question “What is a Good Society?” through exploration of the cultural and musical climate in San Francisco, California from 1945 to 1970. The musical products of this time and place were influenced by a worldview that was critical of the mainstream concept of a “Good Society” and played a significant part in expressing opposition to this view and in suggesting alternatives to it. The formation of both individual and group identity in a Good Society will be critically examined through the analysis of the ideas of “Beat” poets and philosophers, West Coast Jazz, and Psychedelic rock music created in, and influenced by, San Francisco from 1945 to 1970.

8:00 Economics and Social Welfare

This course will focus on contributions economists have about economic organization and economic policy in response to the question, “what is a good society?” We will look at policy on markets—do we get the best results if we let markets run without regulation? When should the government step in and regulate markets? What can it do when there are problems of pollution, scarce resources, ignorant consumers, dangerous conditions,
and collusion? We will look at problems of workers—is society improved by policy on discrimination, collective action, and minimum wages? Can these problems be best addressed locally, nationally or internationally? We will look at problems of entire countries. What can a country do to develop? Should it protect its own industries or engage in international competition, joining the WTO? We will look at what is the best macro-economy. Should policy fight inflation, unemployment or stagnation?

8:00 (Honors) Frankenstein’s Dreams

This course will explore the diverse alterations individuals make to their appearance or performance in an effort to improve their social status. We will also investigate the potential for science and technological innovations to influence the sort of changes individuals may seek for themselves or their children in the future. The alterations we discuss may be of a temporary sort, as occurs when athletes consume performance-enhancing drugs, or permanent, as is the case when parents select for the sex and other physical characteristics of their offspring. Students will be expected to rigorously explore the potential impacts of such “enhancements” on human interactions and thus the structure of our society. This course is intended to extend student inquiry from Pacific Seminar I into the role of our civil interactions with one another and the natural world in the making of a good society.

8:00 Global Warming: Is it Hot in Here?

Is the earth heating up? Is human activity contributing to global climate change? Why should we be concerned? What should we do about it? These are questions that informed citizens need to be able to answer. The answers to these questions affect how a “good society” operates. The objective of this course is to address the science of global warming (including the factors that contribute to climate change and the evidence for global climate change in the past and present). In addition we will investigate present and future impacts of global warming and consider how societies should address the issue. The primary objective is that students will be well enough informed about the science of global warming to be able determine fact from fiction and engage in informed debate about the policy implications.

8:00 Who Gets What and Why?

“Most people, of course, are aware of the fact that some people are rich while others are poor. But people in general are usually less aware of the rather systematic social forces that structure such outcomes.... Most people too are aware of the fact that some individuals have more influence than others, with the power to shape national issues of war and peace, economic well-being, and general social welfare. But, again, people are usually much less aware of how a system of stratification form the basis of such influence.” Harold Kerbo, Social Stratification and Inequality (2006)

Income inequality in the United States has grown since the 1980’s. Although experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in decades and longest running economic
expansion, the United States continues to have a greater poverty rate than other industrialized nations, even among people who work full-time. Downsizing, outsourcing, lower wages, and reduced benefits have led to continued inequality. What has happened to create this environment? Who is affected by our current state? What can be done to create change? In this course, social stratification becomes a lens through which opportunity, life expectancy, health, social position, power, and wealth are explored. The influence of social stratification on events such as war, peace, economic expansion/stagnation, employment, and government policy is assessed, leading to a deeper understanding of social stratification and its role within American society.

8:00 The Politics of Punk

This course will explore the ethos of punk rock as it attempts to interrogate, deconstruct and ultimately reconstruct the reigning status quo. Punk goes beyond protest in its attempt to subvert authority that is perceived as corrupt, immoral or misguided. We will utilize readings, music, film excerpts and class discussions to develop an understanding of the punk movement in a historical context as well as its current embodiment in music subcultures such as straight edge and hard-core punk. Students will do both individual and group assignments, which will include writing, research, argumentation and a group project. We will begin with defining both authority and rebellion in a culture and consider various critical responses to authority. Students will investigate and discuss the moral, ethical, social, cultural and legal agendas surrounding the punk movement. The course work will blend a combination of the punk DIY approach with a serious assessment of which elements of the punk agenda are useful in constructing a good society and challenging what is perceived as an unjust social, political or cultural establishment. Creativity will be encouraged in the development of articulate punk manifestos supporting student’s arguments. Ultimately, the class will utilize the punk movement to teach students how passionate, informed writing (be it music, poetry, speech or essays) can be the vehicle for change when the writer is fully committed to his or her message.

8:00 Global Politics of the Body

This seminar focuses on the body. Although so intimate and private, our bodies link us to a variety of political, economic, and cultural projects. From the notorious eugenics movement to more quotidian modes of reproductive control, managing bodies has been a fundamental feature of both past and present societies around the world. The body is also a site where we fiercely claim our sense of ownership and define our own identity through working out, dieting, piercing, and tattooing, to name just a few ways we modify and control our bodies. In this seminar, we will use a global comparative framework to explore how different societies have defined a "good society" through managing the body. In particular, we will analyze how medicine, in conjunction with the family, the state, the market, and religious and educational organizations, has created the normative body and what forms of technology have been deployed in the process. We will also examine how citizens, patients, and consumers have sought to improve society through using our bodies as sites of activism and have both participated in and resisted the
process of creating the normative body, both as individuals and as a collective. Course
topics will include organ transplantation, eugenics, sexuality, reproductive politics, public
health, and epidemics. By focusing on the body, where the public and the private meet,
this seminar will explore the critical intersection of two major themes introduced in
Pacific Seminar I, namely, Family & Civil Society and Politics, Law & Citizenship.

8:00 Creating Health and Well-Being

This course focuses on current thought and practices available to consciously create our
ideal levels of health and well being. It assumes the multi-dimensional nature of “being
human” and incorporates a holistic perspective for integrating our physical, emotional,
mental and spiritual “selves”. Emphasis is placed on a re-conceptualization of health and
well being, as well as of the mind-body relationship. Major areas explored include
alternative health care systems (e.g. acupunture, biofeedback, homeopathy, naturopathic
thought, network chiropractics) and various types of energy and bodywork (e.g. chakra
balancing, light therapy, massage, reflexology, reiki.). Example topics are:

1. Balancing food, herbs, and supplements for a healthy lifestyle
2. The dynamics of energy, vibration, and health/healing
3. Specific techniques for consciously creating a life of health and well being

The course format combines readings, discussions, and guest speakers. Experiential
learning opportunities represent a significant component in an effort to familiarize the
student with alternative practices for assuming self-responsibility for health and well
being.

8:00 Myth Conceptions: Old and New

Some people believe we live in a "myth-less" society. They think myths are found among
ancient, superstitious, or traditional folk, and not among modern, scientific people. This
course is founded on the contrary assumption that every society has myths; it is
inevitable. Although not presuming to enumerate which myths constitute a good society,
the course will show that "mythologically-aware" citizens are one of its necessary
ingredients. After we consider the parameters of the category "myth," we will read
several narratives (occasionally with accompanying images) from the Ancient Near East,
including the Enuma Elish and texts from the Hebrew Bible, among others. By reading
these ancient myths in their historical context along with their differing versions, we will
see that myths were employed to construct and support ancient social identity, cultural
prestige, and various politico-religious programs. The issues and themes we investigate in
the ancient setting will then be used analogically to understand modern manifestations of
mythmaking, especially in America, but also to some extent in other modern social
groups (e.g., Islamicist movements). Far from static, we will learn that "myth" is an
ideological battle ground open to contestation, alteration, and usurpation. This course
builds on the themes in Pacific Seminar I of Education and Authority and Politics, Law,
and Citizenship I.

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8:00 Film Censorship

In this course, we will study the history of film censorship around the world in order to understand how censorship has shaped—and continues to shape—the art and industry of moving images. The course will include screenings of important and controversial movies from film history, as well as primary and secondary readings that will help us to understand what makes it on screen and what doesn’t. We will study foundational texts and hot-spots in cinematic history, including the Production Code Administration that regulated Hollywood films from the 1930s-50s and the move to a ratings system in the 1960s. Although the first public screening of a motion picture took place in 1895, it wasn’t until a 1952 censorship case that the Supreme Court gave film first-amendment protection in the United States. How does censorship shape and respond to different communities and modes of interpretation or reception? Censorship is usually understood as the repression of content considered sexually or politically dangerous, but Hollywood also ‘censors’ itself in other ways to fit accepted genres and maximize box office receipts. Where do we draw the line between political censorship and studio decisions made to maximize a film’s audience base and profitability? We will also study the forms of censorship at work in other national or alternative cinemas, including “indie” films and films from Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. Students will write a research paper about a film controversy of their choice and present their findings to the class.

8:00 Is Religion Good for Women?

This course will explore the roots of organized religion and its effects on women in society. Lives of women have been shaped, molded and informed by the role women have played in religion, from the stories of scripture to the first allowed ordained woman pastor, to those still kept outside the ranks of priesthood. This course will explore Judeo-Christian holy writings to seek out roots of the current system of patriarchy and gender roles and will continue through the early formation of the Christian church and ask “what happened to the women?” This question will guide us as we read primary sources (translated), scholarly commentary and exegesis as well as both social and cultural evidence of the religious effects on women in their domestic, professional and civic lives. Since organized religion often functions as its own form of education, has its own definitions of family and civil society, has significant effects on politics, and implies a view of humans’ relation to the natural world, this course will refer back to the main themes of Pacific Seminar I.

8:00 (Honors) Crime, Responsibility, Punishment

The general question motivating this course is: How does a good society approach punishment? Roughly 25,000,000 crimes are documented each year in America. More than 2,000,000 people are currently in America’s prisons and jails. Roughly 1/5th are there on drug-related charges. Black males are incarcerated at seven times the rate of white males. California alone has more than 30 state prisons, by most accounts all overcrowded; and names like San Quentin and Folsom—not to mention Alcatraz—are culturally iconic. Recently, the American government has held people in detention
abroad for multiple years at a time without charge or trial. It is thus no surprise that while philosophical discussion of punishment has literally ancient origins, punishment remains even today a topic that generates lively philosophical debate. We'll jump into this debate! Specific questions to be considered include: Is knowingly and intentionally breaking the law ever morally permissible? Is "retribution" a legitimate justification for punishment, or is this just a fancy word for morally unworthy lust for revenge? Should factors such as a troubled upbringing, impairment due to substance abuse, youth, a very low IQ, or insanity, at least partly excuse a crime? How do powerful philosophical challenges to the notion of "free will" bear on punishment? Rather than being "punished," should criminals be "treated" (as if criminality is a kind of "sickness")? What role, if any, should the victim (or victim's loved ones) have in determining punishment? Is capital punishment ever morally justified? What about torture? We'll explore the issues through literature, film, journalistic pieces, Supreme Court decisions, and fascinating readings from the world of philosophy. This will all tie into Pacific Seminar I discussions on the purpose of law and government as well as on citizens' rights and responsibilities. It is anticipated that a service-learning element of the course will involve volunteering at a local youth detention center.

8:00 Culture and Belief

"And the world, to each individual, means the part of it with which he comes in contact; his party, his sect, his church, his class of society... and it never troubles him that mere accident has decided which of these numerous worlds is the object of his reliance."
John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

How does our cultural background influence our beliefs and values, and thus our behavior? Or, to paraphrase Mill, what is our "world" and how does it shape us? And how do other "worlds" vary from ours? How do belief systems, values and behaviors vary across cultures? This class will explore these questions with a three-fold approach. First, we will look at the "hard facts" and examine cross-cultural research, mainly from the fields of psychology and anthropology, which has relevance to the question of the nature of good social relationships in good societies. Students will learn about the most commonly studied constructs in cross-cultural research, such as individualism/collectivism, as well the distinctions between cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, and indigenous psychologies. Secondly, we will combine those hard facts with contributions from fiction (literature and film) that shed further light on the questions of cross-cultural differences or similarities. Lastly, we will draw from our own personal experience. The final course project will be to develop a personal narrative—this may be the student's own narrative or the narrative of a person of their choosing—that examines one's beliefs and values drawing on the material covered in the class. We will also try to invite some guest speakers for a more personal account of cross-cultural experiences.
8:00 (Honors) Peak Oil and Beyond

It can be argued that a “Good Society” cannot be achieved without abundant and relatively cheap sources of energy. Yet it is the scientific conclusion of many highly respected geologists, chemists and investment bankers that world oil production will peak sometime during your years in college and after that will decline. Yes, you may, indeed, entertain your grandchildren by describing how a gasoline station looked and worked. This course will objectively examine the world’s current total fossil fuel energy reserves and production, usage patterns and the environmental consequences of the dependence on fossil fuels. We will also compare different predictions about near and far-term energy scenarios. Alternative sources of energy such as nuclear and non-conventional hydrocarbons and renewable energies such as wind and solar photovoltaics will also be studied. The underlying science and the environmental, economic, and societal impact of the future emergence of each potential energy source will be examined by lecture and by readings. Since governmental policies are critical to development of alternative energy sources, teams of four students will research and write a group paper advocating changes in government energy policy.

8:00 Buddhist Societies

Buddhist societies offer us fresh and invigorating perspectives on how people should live together. Buddhist rulers did not assume their political power in the same way as many Western monarchs did, that is they did not rely on force and military power, but rather, it was due to their moral virtues that they rose to high positions in government. This attitude toward the government was reflected in how social issues were traditionally resolved in the Buddhist societies. From criminal justice to suicide, robbery, abortion and prostitution, it was always the principle of the ahimsa—causing the least amount of harm to all parties involved—which has been used to resolve the crisis. In this seminar, we will talk about issues pertaining to understanding how to organize our societies in a best possible way, and by doing so we will raise again most, if not all, of questions from Pacific Seminar I. However, this time, the answers will come from the greatest Buddhist teachers of Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, Tibet and Japan and the historical lessons which these Buddhist societies offer to modern humankind.

8:00 And Justice for All

What obligations do citizens owe each other? What obligations does society owe its citizens? This course will explore the relationship between the rule of law and the good society. The course will focus on how the law is organized and applied and the particular moral and philosophical issues that are raised in the context of legal dispute. Students will be encouraged to think through actual legal debates—many of them still alive in the courts. The course will be divided into three sections. The first section will concern obligations which arise under civil law. The second section will cover obligations which arise under criminal law. The final section of the course will concern the obligations that society owes its citizens under constitutional law. Initial discussions on legal practice, legal reasoning, and the nature of law are followed by close readings of actual cases.
Students will also analyze relevant works in philosophy and contemporary jurisprudence. In addition to numerous philosophical and legal readings, students will analyze significant legal cases including Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California, People v. Goetz, Brown v. Board of Education, Korematsu v. United States, Roe v. Wade, and many others. Students will be evaluated by their ability to apply their knowledge to real world situations. They will participate in a group exercises that will be based on resolving hypothetical problems relevant to the readings. After each section of the course there will be a class debate, mock trial, or formal oral presentation.