

HONORS FORUM COURSES
Spring 2012

HF-200 .001 Game of Kings: Chess in the Middle Ages
J. Courts

1 Credit

In the late medieval world, chess was more than game, it was an allegory for diverse facets of society, including war, politics, and love. All of social interaction could be temporarily played out over a game of chess, and while the actual performances were ephemeral, evidence of these lost games survive in literature as well as in the material playing field: chess pieces and game boards. This Honors course explores the Islamic origins and varied social functions of medieval chess through a combination of reading and viewing primary materials, as well as a critical investigation of modern scholarship on chess in the later Middle Ages. Incorporated within this course is a student bus trip to the Cloisters to view the *Lewis Chessmen*, on loan from the British Museum for a special limited exhibition. In addition to writing short responses to articles discussed in class, students will collaborate on producing their own chess manuscript, an illustrated compendium of the origins and assorted meanings of the individual chess pieces.

HF-200 .002 Words and Images
M. Wolff

1 Credit

The function of the image, as Gogol said, is to express life itself, not ideas or arguments about life,|| the famed film maker Andrey Tarkovsky asserts in his book *Sculpting In Time*; the image —does not signify life, or symbolize it, but embodies it. Is this silent embodiment perhaps why nonfiction writers, skilled at ideas and arguments, so often turn their prose and contemplation toward visual images that move them? Are writers challenged by that silent embodiment to provide a written voice for the image? How can writers depict the effect of a visual image upon them, without distorting the image? How does one write a visual autobiography? In this nonfiction literature class, we read from the works of writers transfixed by visual images in photography, painting, and film. We consider the potential tension between image and text created by collaborators, such as James Agee and Walker Evans; we explore visual art that turns literary image into visual experience; and we study nonfiction writing that esteems photography, painting and film as necessary companions in a writer's education. We view photographs, paintings and films selected or created by the assigned authors. Likely writers for study are Maggie Nelson, Geoff Dyer, Italo Calvino, James Agee, Michael Kimmelman, James Fenton, Andrey Tarkovsky, Ingmar Bergman, Leonard Michaels, Charles Simic, Susan Sontag, Phillip Lopate, and Terrence Malick. Visual works may include art by William Gedney, Robert Capa, Sally Mann, Holly Wright, Pierre Bonnard, J.M. W. Turner, Edward Hopper and more.

Required work: Three major essays; three substantial written exercises; class discussion.

HF add-on: Students enrolled in English 228 WORD AND IMAGE may elect an additional Honors course add-on entitled *Visual Autobiographies*. Requirements include the work of English 228 plus approximately 10 additional hours of study, a journal, related fieldwork if available, and the making of a final Visual Autobiography in text and image.

HF-200 .003 Social Psychology (Bi-weekly) 1 Credit
H. Hodgins
W 3:00 – 5:00

Social Psychology uses science to understand the complex ways human think, feel, and behave in social situations. Thus, anything that humans do is fair game for investigation by social psychology! In this Honors Add-On, we will consider behaviors that are outside the scope of the primary course, including romantic partner growth, moral disengagement, gendered language, seating choice and humor in romantic contexts.

HF-203 .001 Student Citizenship 4 Credits
R. Rotheim
T TH 3:40 – 5

Citizen Studentship is the first course in Skidmore's history to be designed by students. The course gives students the chance to break down traditional educational structures of authority, thus offering an alternative method of education that emphasizes participation and responsibility as a member of the academic community. Students will challenge each other, generating their own assignments for which they must think, speak and write critically. Citizen Studentship will culminate in the design and fulfillment of a class project that will help students to find their potential for making a meaningful contribution to the intellectual environment of the campus and the community at large.

CS-375H .001 Computer Science Research 1 Credit
G. Effinger

An introductory exploration of research in computer science. The students, in collaboration with a faculty mentor, will participate in a research project in a particular area of computer science. The research projects may, for example, include designing new algorithms for computational problems, surveying the research literature, implementing existing algorithms from the research literature, or performing computational experiments.

EC-104H .001 Hon: Intro Microeconomics 4 Credits
L. Vargha
M W 4:00 – 5:20

This is an introductory course in microeconomics, the branch of economics that studies how households and firms make decisions and how they interact in markets. We will

cover topics such as supply and demand analysis, consumption and production choice, government intervention in markets, market outcomes under perfect competition, monopoly and oligopoly, and market failure. Students will also be introduced to several of the traditional applied fields of microeconomics, such as public economics, environmental economics, industrial organization, and international trade.

EN-105H .001

Exoticism Reconsidered

4 Credits

B. Gogineni

M W 4:00 – 5:20

It has been claimed that the greatest problem of knowledge in the past century has been the problem of the other: the other of the past, the other of geography, the other within. Given the modern preoccupation with otherness, exoticism—a complex mode of relation between the self and a foreign other—deserves a new hearing. If the exotic fascinates because of its very difference, then it is always in some sense both attracting and repelling us—remaining different yet drawing us close. We long for the exotic, yet to merge into it completely is to eliminate its appealing difference. In exoticism how does fear relate to desire, and to what effect? How does our encounter with the exotic Other affect our understanding of self? Is there such a thing as the genuinely exotic these days? This course will re-open the case on exoticism, exploring many aesthetic, philosophical, ethical, and affective dimensions that have been overlooked. Through our writing, the emphasis of the course, we will critically analyze the following theoretical, literary, visual, and musical texts: Said's *Orientalism* (excerpts), Segalen's —Essay on Exoticism,|| Bataille's essays on the sacred, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* (Rubin's introduction to the exhibition catalogue for MoMA), Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Salih's *The Season of Migration to the North*, Freud's —The Uncanny,|| *Flaubert in Egypt*, Jim Clifford's —On Ethnographic Surrealism,|| urban style magazines (*The Fader*, *Trace*), women's fashion magazines, and recordings of contemporary World Music.

Course requirements include active participation in seminar discussions; frequent, ungraded, informal short writing assignments; and 3 formal, graded papers (totalling 25-30 pages) with an emphasis on drafting, revision, and peer review. Each formal essay develops a particular critical writing approach. Students will be encouraged to invite cultural texts of their own choosing into their own writing.

EN-105H .002

Confidence: The Conundrum

4 Credits

L. Hall

T TH 9:40 – 11:00

“Ninety-four percent of college professors believe they are above-average teachers,|| an op-ed columnist recently sneered, —and ninety percent of drivers believe they are above average behind the wheel.|| Less confident drivers might be more cautious, but would less confident professors be more effective? What about less confident op-ed columnists? athletes? parents? students? And is there such a thing as the —right amount|| of confidence, anyway? The premise of this seminar is that confidence is complex and mysterious—the imponderable quality,|| as Virginia Woolf called it. We shall nonetheless ponder it, reading what great writers have had to say on this and related

matters (modesty, false modesty, ambition, arrogance) and using their work to inform our own analytical essays. Course requirements: four graded essays, weekly informal exercises, and three conferences with the instructor.

EN-105H .003

The Land of Absurdity

4 Credits

M. Wiseman

M W F 12:20 – 1:15

This course will take us into the land of absurdity, as mapped by fiction writers, filmmakers, poets, and playwrights. We will venture into regions of dark humor, charged outrage, searing satire, and profound silliness, with the aid of such guides as Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol, Lewis Carroll, Alfred Jarry, Donald Barthelme, Flann O'Brien, Eugène Ionesco, and the patron saint of serious exuberance, François Rabelais. We will see the absurd as brought to us on screen by Luis Buñuel, the Marx Brothers, Terry Gilliam, and Lindsay Anderson. Sinister, ludicrous, surreal, irreverent, or all of the above, these portrayals and explorations will help us to think about, and especially to write about, the absurdity we might find in our own lives. We will ask, How do these visions illuminate our own dilemmas? How, in other words, can absurd perspective help us to live? How does an appreciation of paradox deepen and free our thinking? How can chaos and incoherence be shaped—how is incoherence made coherent? Thus, the relationship between certainty and chaos, the disjunction between seeing and knowing, the blurred distinctions among sense, senselessness, and nonsense, the uses of satire, and the mingling of the sublime and the ridiculous will serve as catalysts for our writing as well as for our discussions. Our writing practice will emphasize understanding and developing our own writing processes. Students will write frequent short papers of several types—personal, analytical, persuasive, reflective—and three substantial essays, submitted first as drafts and then in careful revision.

EN-228H .001

Victorian Illustrated Book

4 Credits

C. Golden

T TH 2:10-3:30

What was the last book you read with illustrations? Was it a graphic novel, a comic book, or a children's book? All of these types of books have their roots in the Victorian illustrated book, a genre for adults as well as young readers. Illustrations were part of the adult reading experience of the Victorian age. Images did not simply embellish the Victorian illustrated book as we often conceive of illustration today; rather, pictures added meaning, which, in turn, influenced how an audience "read" fiction and poetry. This Honors, writing-intensive course explores the form of the Victorian illustrated book with attention to illustration, critical analysis, and creative practice. The class will focus on illustrated novels, picture-poems, and critical studies in aesthetics and literature to discern how a poem is like and different from a picture (the "ut pictura poesis" tradition) or comment upon the collaboration of image and word as an art form. Special attention will be given to the poem and painting pairs of D.G. Rossetti; the illustrated fiction of Dickens, Carroll, and Potter; the aesthetic ideas of Horace, Plato, and Lessing; analytic writing; and primary research. Students will learn to *read* illustrations like their Victorian

audiences once did. We will work in the rare book room and put on a library exhibition on an aspect of Victorian literature and culture. In addition to writing frequent papers, students will become author-illustrators to create their own illustrated texts.

EN-229H .001 The Empire Strikes Back: Postcolonial 3 Credits
B. Gogineni
T TH 3:40 – 5:00

The pen was perhaps the most powerful weapon employed in the fight against empire throughout the world in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Often, but not always, postcolonial authors asserted their culture's sovereignty in the language of their colonizer, —using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house. || This course will look at the literature of the decolonizing and post-Independence era in three major sites of European colonialism. Questions we will ponder include: In what sources do these newly or soon-to-be independent nations discover their narrative power—power to reclaim political ground that has been taken from them, power to re-articulate the imperial experience from their point of view, and power to alter their place in the world's record of history and literature? How do writers affiliate themselves with and differentiate themselves from the colonial literary tradition they have inherited? How do they integrate indigenous forms, traditions, and worldviews with colonially imported ones? How do postcolonial novels handle the pressing post-Independence concerns of gender, subalternity, corruption, and neo-colonialism?

Course requirements: Midterm paper (5-7 pages), final paper (10-12 pages), midterm exam, and final exam. Regular attendance.

MA-126H .001 Hon: Problem Solving (Fr) 1 Credit
R. Hurwitz
TH 2:10 – 3:30

Students will work collaboratively on problems posed in various undergraduate mathematics journals and other sources. Solutions to journal problems will be submitted to the journal editors for acknowledgement and possible publication. Problems are taken from all areas of specialty within mathematics. During the fall semester, students will have an opportunity to compete in the annual William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition. Introductory (125H, for first-year students), intermediate (225H, for sophomores) and advanced (325H, for juniors and seniors) levels will meet concurrently. The course will meet 1-2 hours per week; grades will be on a S/U basis. MA125H prerequisite: QR1, MA225H, MA325H prerequisite: Qr2.

MA-226H .001 Hon: Problem Solving (So) 1 Credit
R. Hurwitz
TH 2:10 – 3:30

Students will work collaboratively on problems posed in various undergraduate mathematics journals and other sources. Solutions to journal problems will be submitted to the journal editors for acknowledgement and possible publication. Problems are taken

