Undergraduate Course Descriptions – Fall 2021

Below you will find descriptions for some exciting courses which we are offering in Fall 2021 semester. Please refer to the course catalog for a complete list of History course descriptions. Carefully read the descriptions below to discover courses which are interesting to you and relevant for your degree.

An important note regarding HIST498: History Reading Seminar and HIST497: History Research Seminar:

These seminars are a type of culminating experience for history majors. All history students must take HIST497 (Research Seminar) and HIST498 (Reading Seminar). We strongly encourage you to take these classes in different semesters. The seminars are capped at 15 students. They also allow you to delve deeply into a reading topic (498) or to conduct primary source research (497). The seminars also provide wonderful opportunities to create and experience intellectual communities in the classroom (actual or virtual).

In the past, we have asked students to contact faculty to request permission numbers to add both HIST497 and 498. We found that this approach created a lot of confusion and invariably graduating seniors who needed the class were caught without a permission number. As a result, we are trying a new approach.

The history department will not require faculty permission numbers to add HIST497/498 in Fall 2021. Instead, all sections of 497/498 will be reserved for graduating seniors (90 units or more) from the first day of enrollment until Monday, July 5, 2021. If you are a graduating senior, please enroll in the class of your choice as early as possible.

On Tuesday, July 6, 2021, the remaining seats in HIST497/498 will be open to students with junior status.

Please note that if you failed HIST497/498 and must retake it, you should contact the history department immediately – ideally before the start of enrollment. For these emergency situations, the department will be able to provide a permission number to ensure that you get the seminar you need to substitute for the failed seminar so you can graduate.

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HIST 301: HISTORIAN’S CRAFT  
Class No. 12269 | M 4-7:45PM | ONLINE/FOS | Dr. Donal O’Sullivan
For history majors, this course serves as an introduction into the use and interpretation of historical sources. All aspects of the research process will be discussed: finding and organizing sources, examining the historiographical discussion, and writing under strict deadlines. This course will help you in the 'basics' of historical research: from finding topics to identifying a question, from assembling and organizing data to writing, revising and finishing a paper. We will also focus on presentation skills with a view to participation in future conferences. This is a reading- and writing-intensive class. We will have one Zoom session a week, with a discussion board to upload comments, ideas, questions. The broader topic of the class is The Reformation in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

HIST 496EH: US ENVIRO HIST  
Class No. 21096 | MW 11AM-12:15PM | ONLINE/FOS | Dr. Natale Zappia
This course explores the environmental history of North America until the expansion of modern industrial agriculture. It additionally focuses on the environmental history of Los Angeles and California through the lens of environmental history. Themes include environmental encounters, land use, consumption, production, and trading routes. This course also requires virtual participation in our campus garden as a “food lab” where we will produce micro-food systems in colonial and modern contexts. In the lab you will learn and demonstrate basic urban farming skills that connect with the course readings, discussions, and assignments. Additionally, this course is a designated service-learning course with a community-based learning component. This semester, we will collaborate with several local urban farmers, environmental justice non-profits, and LAUSD schools to better understand how environmental issues and concerns are addressed in diverse urban communities across Los Angeles and beyond. In addition to in-person workshops on campus, each student will create an “ecological proposal” in consultation with community partners. Thus, this community component will deeply enrich students’ exploration of the cultural, historical, and institutional frames that compose an ecological imaginary of sustainable systems.

HIST 497A: THE OPIUM WARS  
Class No. 12807 | R 7-9:45PM | ONLINE/FOS | Dr. Richard Horowitz
In 1839, Commissioner Lin Zexu arrived in Canton (Guangzhou) tasked with ending the illegal but incredibly lucrative trade in opium. When he destroyed the opium stocks held by merchants – both Chinese and foreign -- the British government went to war. Victory in the three year-long conflict established British dominance in East and Southeast Asia and transformed China’s relationship with the world. But just fourteen years later, unsatisfied with the results of the first conflict, British diplomats manufactured an incident to start a second war which would last four years and end with British and French troops marching to Beijing and looting the Qing Emperor’s magnificent Summer Palace.

This course is primarily a research course where students will undertake independent there own research projects. The work will focus on the trade in opium, tea, and other products, the origins and conduct of the two wars, and the transformation of the relationship between China and the Europeans and North Americans who came for war, diplomacy, trade and to pursue missionary activity.
No prior knowledge of the subject matter is necessary, but some summer reading is recommended.

This course will be taught synchronously on zoom, but there will be substantial asynchronous elements.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Horowitz (richard.horowitz@csun.edu)

HIST 497B: LATIN AMERICA’S GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY
Class No. 12848 | F 9:30AM-12:15PM | BB1131 | Dr. Fitzpatrick-Behrens

By 2025, Latin America will surpass Europe to become the global region with the highest number of Christians. Latin America is also arguably the site of the earliest and largest-scale global “conversion” to Christianity. Spanish and Portuguese Catholics who invaded what came to be known as Latin America more than 500 years ago did so with legal sanction provided by the Pope. Their “right” (which others debated then and later) to territories of the region was predicated on their conversion of Native populations to Christianity. Enslaved Africans subsequently brought forcibly to the region also became subject to European efforts to convert them to Catholicism, although slave traders and owners were often much more eager to use religion as a method to control the enslaved than to save their souls.

Surprisingly, despite the imposition, indigenous and African-descendant peoples embraced Catholicism but they did so on their own terms, transforming practices, symbols, prayers, music, iconography, social hierarchy, and architecture to preserve their own religious practices and beliefs. In Latin America European Christianity thus came to be defined by the beliefs and practices of the global South’s majority indigenous and African-descendant populations through a process of what Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined “transculturation”.

This class will examine this process. We will look at Christian-indigenous-African-descendant transculturation as evidenced in material culture (images, icons, altars) and public rituals of faith (processions). Through this study we will gain a distinct understanding of the history of Latin America and of global Christianity.

HIST 497C:
Class No. 12850 | T 4:00PM-6:45PM | ONLINE | Dr. Moyses Marcos

This proseminar will focus on the long life and consequential reign of Augustus (63 BCE – 14 CE), Rome’s first emperor. We will read and study various types of primary sources on Augustus and his times (literary sources and material culture) that help to illustrate Roman political culture, image and authority, patronage, the transfer of imperial power, integration, assimilation, and resistance, political (in)stability, and the role of government in Roman society. This proseminar will consist of weekly readings and discussions, short analyses of sources, and a 10-12 page research paper.
In 1949, Germany was formally divided into West and East Germany. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), a frontline state of the Cold War, viewed itself as a progressive society establishing the first Socialist state in German history. For Western observers, it remained a compliant tool of the Soviet Union. In 1990, the GDR was dissolved, and Germany was unified. But what was it really like to grow up and live in the GDR? What were the major achievements, and what were the main drawbacks of this experiment? You will study famous personalities and ordinary citizens, Olympic champions and dissidents, works of art and everyday objects. Sources include memoirs, contemporary novels, and movies from the country behind the iron curtain.

This seminar will begin with readings on the trial and burning of Joan of Arc, and then shift focus to the obsession with witch-hunts and trials in early modern Europe. Our focus will be the widespread fear of treason, heresy, and witchcraft in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, with a particular emphasis on the persecution of women in the late medieval and early modern period. If circumstances are favorable, this class will meet in-person on campus every week.