

BLOUNT 301 SEMINARS, FALL 2018

Zen Meditation, Experimental Art, & Time - Hank Lazer

BUI 301-002 (CRN: 46602) - M 02:00 pm - 04:50 pm

The course will involve an introduction to Zen Buddhism, relying on Shunryu Suzuki's classic *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, as well as an additional text or two, with attention to Zen perspectives on time, including Dogen's "Uji" and Heschel's book *Sabbath*. We'll learn and practice zazen (sitting meditation). Through the lens of Zen practice, we will explore a range of experimental arts/artists, with particular emphasis on works that involve our relationship to time, perhaps including contemporary music, performance art, environmental art, film, and dance. Artists we might consider include John Cage, Marina Abramovic, Andy Goldsworthy, Linda Montano, Richard Linklater, Eiko and Koma, Bill Viola, and Kazuaki Tanahashi. Students will both discuss the art we examine and make some related art works of their own.

Information Technologies: World Scripts from Ancient Civilizations to Modernity - Alexandre Tokovinine

BUI 301-003 (CRN: 42094) - MW 02:00 pm - 03:15 pm

Few technologies are as central to our modern lives as writing. And yet it is a comparatively recent human invention and many cultures including some great civilizations of the past relied on few written words or none at all. This course explores the tremendous diversity of world writing systems and how individual scripts are embedded in their linguistic, social, and cultural setting. The course also highlights the challenges in deciphering and studying ancient scripts and languages.

We begin with trying to define writing and distinguish it from its precursors and other ways of recording and transmitting information. We discuss the emergence of writing, its changes over time, particularly in the context of cultural contacts and colonialism, and the occasional "deaths" of the scripts. The course then highlights three "great decipherments" (Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Cuneiform, and Mayan) and investigates the conditions, which made the code-breaking possible, as well as the academic and cultural impacts of the discoveries. The scripts currently resisting the decipherment efforts are also discussed. We are going to conclude by looking at featural scripts, writing and decipherment in popular imagination, and "non-writing" (pseudo- and crypto-scripts).

Archaeology of Food - Katherine Chiou

BUI 301-010 (CRN: 46029) - TR 02:00 pm - 03:15 pm

We all need to eat--this is an undeniable truth. As human beings, however, we also live to eat. The consumption of food is, after all, a deeply meaningful endeavor that cannot be divorced from its context. The daily, habitual act of nourishment is part and parcel of who we are and who we strive to be--whether we consciously realize it or not. For those interested in ancient cuisines and culinary techniques, an archaeological study of food and its ties to selfhood allows us to gain a more intimate perspective on peoples' lives in the past--and by extension--our lives as well.

In this class on the archaeology of food, we undertake a broad survey of the literature on ancient foodways, addressing major themes including the domestication of plants

BLOUNT 301 SEMINARS, FALL 2018

and animals; food and social complexity; food, power, politics, and status; the daily meal; feasting and drinking; plating and presentation; food preferences/taste and disgust; and the intimate relationship between food and identity. Furthermore, we discuss the wide range of methods and techniques in the archaeologist's toolkit that aid in the undertaking of gastronomic research, including the analysis of plant and animal remains, residues recovered from cooking and serving ware, and the chemical composition of human bones.

Robert Johnson and the Birth of Rock and Soul - Joseph Hornsby

BUI 301-012 (CRN: 46030) - TR 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

This course will focus on Delta blues and Robert Johnson in particular. But we will also look at his influences and musical progeny. Most particularly, Charlie Patton, Skip James, Howlin Wolf, Muddy Waters, Johnny Shines and Robert Lockwood Jr. we will listen to lots of music, try to decipher lyrics, and see if the devil is responsible for this music. We will also read some good books about blues history. See you at the crossroads.

National Parks and Wildlife Conservation - Stephen Schwab

BUI 301-014 (CRN: 48482) - W 10:00 am - 12:15 pm

This course would be based in part on the Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan's book "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," but it would also include selected essays by Aldo Leopold in "The Sand County Almanac," and writings by and about John Muir, and possibly Barry Lopez, "Of Wolves and Men." The central aim of the course would be to gain a multi-faceted appreciation of our natural world and its fragility in modern times.

Slavery, Emancipation, and the University of Alabama - Hilary Green

BUI 301-015 (CRN: 49602) - TR 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

This course will introduce students to the major themes, issues, and questions related to slavery and emancipation in the antebellum United States through readings, discussion, field trips to university archives and museums, written assignments. We will read classic works by James B. Sellers as well as newer works by Al Brophy, Heather Williams, and Daina Ramey Berry for understanding the institution of slavery, emancipation, and its legacy at the University of Alabama.

The Wonderful World of Insects - John Abbott

BUI 301-016 (CRN: 49252) - W 03:30 pm - 06:00 pm

Insects are everywhere. It is thought that there are at least 5 million insect species on the planet, and only 1.5 million have been described. They represent the most diverse group of animals on Earth. It should be no surprise then, that insects make our world much more interesting. They play an underappreciated role in food webs, including our own (yes, you will get to eat insects in this class). They are the first animals on the planet to fly, they are the first animals to develop a social structure, and they have arguably the most complicated and striking form of development, going through several types of metamorphosis. In spite of all the positive attributes associated with insects, some can be destructive and detrimental. It is estimated that at any point in time, one-sixth of the world's population is infected with a fly-borne illness, many of which can kill.

BLOUNT 301 SEMINARS, FALL 2018

It has also been shown that insects are more responsible for the outcomes of wars in our history than man himself. In this course we will learn about the amazing world of insects by exploring the many ways in which they impact our daily lives, historically and today, through our food, culture, engineering and design, health or serving as inspiration to naturalists and artists alike.

Screenwriting: Scene Workshop - Alan Lazer BUI 301-320 (CRN: 42095) - W 06:00 pm - 08:30 pm

Have you ever wondered why some movies make you dream, while others just put you to sleep? In this class, we will seek to answer that question by developing an understanding of dramatic screenwriting. This class will focus on how a scene works by exploring the fundamentals of dramatic storytelling such as conflict, character development, and antagonists. In addition we will develop the ability to analyze creative writing, and improve it through rewriting. Even if you aren't a film buff or aspiring screenwriter, advancing a knowledge of narrative can be useful in your everyday life: you can figure how to create a more compelling paper or presentation, as well as identify how the stories swirling around social media, the news, and other sources may be squirming their way into your subconscious. There are stories all around you, so how about you try writing a few yourself this coming Fall?

Ethics Matter – Stephen Schwab BUI 301-317 (CRN: 50048) – M 10:00 am – 12:15 pm

This seminar focuses on where and to what extent ethics and international affairs intersect. We wrestle with three basic questions: How relevant are ethical considerations to relations between nation states? Is ethical action possible, given the realities of national interests and power politics? How, in ethical terms, can international acts be evaluated? The class will analyze choices that have been made about the use of force, resolving major conflicts, promoting human rights and social justice, encouraging democracy and economic development, preserving the environment, and participating in international organizations. Special attention will also be devoted to the American experience as a principal case study of ethics and statecraft.