Fall 2017 Topical Courses

Hist 400: Junior Seminar Methods and Historiography
Professor Wiese
History 400 is the gateway course for the major in history at San Diego State University. The course is designed to introduce majors to historical methods, theory and historiography through an examination of one area of historical inquiry. This semester, the course will focus on U.S. urban and environmental history. Among the topics covered in the course are research methods, bibliography and citation; modes of historical thinking; uses of evidence; and interpretation and debate within the discipline. The immediate goal of the course is to prepare students to complete a 12 page historiographic essay analyzing recent literature in one area of U.S. urban and environmental history (topic selected in consultation with instructor).

Hist 400: Junior Seminar Methods and Historiography
Professor Passananti
History 400 is the gateway course for the major in history at San Diego State University. The course is designed to introduce majors to historical methods, theory and historiography through an examination of one area of historical inquiry. This semester, the course will focus on Mexican economic and social history. Among the topics covered in the course are the nature of historical truth; the formulation of research questions and the variety of methods used to answer questions, bibliographic and citation standards; modes of historical thinking; the evolving types and uses of evidence; and interpretation and debate within the discipline. Students will consider these issues in class and in their readings, and they will also grapple with practical problems by researching and writing a 12-page essay that surveys and assesses a current historiographical problem in Mexican economic and social history. In consultation with me, each student will identify her/his unique problem to investigate.

Hist 402: History of Childhood: American Experiences
Professor Kornfeld
History 402 explores the history of childhood in America over the past four centuries. A new field of historical inquiry, the history of childhood presents special challenges and opportunities: without textbooks or an established canon of names and dates to memorize, we are forced to seek out a variety of sources, and freed to envision historical study as open, fluid, and creative. We shall bring a new philosophy of learning to this new area of study. There will be no lectures, no quizzes, and no examinations. Rather, the professor and students shall explore various topics in the history of childhood together, bringing our different life experiences, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives to bear on the primary sources and interpretations that we shall read. Individual research, class discussions, and group presentations will allow each student to encounter the emerging material individually and to share her/his insights with a community of scholars. In fall 2017, History 402 will be part of the Arts Alive SDSU Collaborative Course program, which attempts to infuse the arts and interdisciplinary study across the university. Paired with Art 341 Graphic Design II, we will have the opportunity to enhance our study of the history of childhood with collaborative projects in the analysis and design of visual images, culminating in a performance/gallery exhibit in place of a final examination.
Hist 450: Senior Seminar in Historical Research: “Writing the History of Revolutions, Social Protests, and Popular Movements”
Professor Kazemi

History 450 is the capstone course for history majors at San Diego State University. The primary aim of this class is to prepare students to write a scholarly research paper using archival sources and other types of primary evidence. Structured as a seminar, this course focuses on the question of revolutions, social protests, and popular movements in world history. At the outset of the semester, students will choose a specific topic related to some instance of organized social strife in a society that they have studied in the past, that they know its language or languages, and that they can find some original, archival sources about. Students will then spend the rest of the semester reading and writing about their specific topics. In class meetings, students will report on their research progress, peer review each other’s writing, discuss research questions, and study the most recent scholarly literature on the history of social protest in the modern world.

Hist 601: Seminar in Historical Methods
Professor Ferraro

History 601 is a seminar for advanced students of history. The course will begin with a selective survey of methods of approaching and interpreting the discipline. At the same time it will introduce students to some of the leading issues shaping historical study and the profession in general. The emphasis will be on the evolution of the historical profession from the 1960s to the present day. Throughout the course students will explore both historiography and methodology with a view towards developing their own perspectives on the historical profession. When professional historians share their findings through oral presentations and published work they enter into a conversation with other scholars, which includes their contemporaries but also those who have preceded them. The discipline requires that they situate their findings within the context of others, in effect generating conversation within the literature. Often such conversation also generates debate. The debates may involve approaches to history; historical method, such as use of sources; the use of theory; the use of historiography; the interpretation of data; and the conceptualization of problems. As History 601 students you are taking the first step in earning an advanced degree in the historical discipline. It is critical, thus, for your own professional development that you become familiar with some of the major debates that have taken place in the discipline over the last half century but also that you learn how to situate your own research and writing within the context of those who are and have been pursuing the same or related questions.

Hist 620: The Modern Middle Ages
Professor Kuefler

Our sense of the Middle Ages has been shaped, even manipulated, by contemporary concerns. This course will look at the "modern" perspective on the Middle Ages, from how the Middle Ages is depicted in popular film (Braveheart or The Kingdom of Heaven, for example) or TV (The Vikings) and in modern art and architecture (from stained glass to Richardsonian architecture), to how medieval saints are "modernized" (such as Saint Francis of Assisi as the patron of the ecology movement), to the modern retellings of medieval legends (like the search for the Holy Grail in Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code or Beowulf reconfigured as The Hobbit). Is there even a real Middle Ages underneath these modern trappings?
Hist 665: Research Seminar
Professor Kornfeld
This capstone research seminar is designed to allow advanced graduate students to develop their skills in historical research, writing, and criticism. The primary objective is for each student to produce a polished research paper of about 30 double-spaced pages on a focused historical topic of her/his own choice. The paper must offer a historical argument supported by the analysis of primary sources, and demonstrate the significance and originality of that argument in a brief historiographical introduction based on the relevant secondary authorities. Any student with a thesis topic in mind is encouraged to attempt to write a chapter of her/his MA thesis. Students are strongly encouraged to experiment with one or more methods of analysis, sources, and/or arguments that are new to them. Students will also develop their ability to critique shared readings and the work of other seminar members.