Fall 2017 Topical Courses

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 442: People from the Past – The Long Civil Rights Movement
Professor Cline

In this course we will focus on some important contributors to the “long civil rights movement,” which looks at the African American struggle as not something strictly confined to the 1960s and the nonviolent movement for African American rights but as a continuous and enduring freedom struggle linked to a number of other movements and with a much broader chronological, sociological, and regional scope than often considered. Through individual stories we will be able to see the various approaches to creating change in society, and will compare the use of biography, autobiography, and oral history to other historical sources. We will employ traditional biographies as well as graphic novels, documentary, and oral history, and will have the chance to use oral history ourselves to meet civil rights actors within our own community. And we’ll consider why these individuals and this history mattered then and today, and how their examples encourage us to ask profound questions about human behavior and the role of the individual in shaping history.

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 585: History of the Sixties in America
Professor Cline

This course will help us move beyond a conception of the 1960s in America as simply the era of generational divides over politics, culture, and “sex, drugs, and rock n’ roll,” to really consider the various complexities and interpretations of a time in which it seemed as if the whole world was in flux. This course, which will focus on the U.S. but also look outward to consider global movements and patterns, will be animated by two central ideas/questions: 1) Was the 1960s indeed a watershed moment in U.S. history and if so, why? And 2) Why and in what ways do scholars continue to grapple with the issues, legacies, fissures, reverberations, etc., etc., of this decade? The course will also look at how the history of the 1960s has been perceived at various times, and how it has been challenged and changed by recent scholarship. Was the civil rights movement, for example, a victorious final delivery on the American promise of liberty and equality, or was the bow tied too soon? What exactly do the 1960s represent and for whom? Did the Sixties embody a necessary correction of the path of the “American experiment” or a losing of the way, or something else entirely? Is a chronological packaging – the decade by numbers rather than by themes or issues – even helpful? And what are the legacies of the 1960s being felt today?

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.