Spring 2016 Topical Courses

H400 Junior Seminar on Methods and Historiography: Magic and Witchcraft Accusations in the Western Historical Tradition
Pollard
This course introduces History majors to historical methods, theory, and writing in the discipline of History through a close examination of one field of historical inquiry. Our field of inquiry is magic and witchcraft accusations in the western historical tradition, from the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, through Medieval Europe, Early-Modern Europe, and Colonial America. Through course readings and minor assignments, students will become familiar with various approaches to “doing” history and exploring witchcraft studies, including the political, cultural, scientific, religious, psychological, and gendered dimensions of the topic. You will learn how to pursue historical research, how to apply historical methods to conduct research, how to read and ask questions of scholarly articles and books, how to contribute to scholarly discourse in the classroom and beyond SDSU, how to produce a historiographical assessment of a given topic, and how to use digital humanities to conduct and to share your work. The final project in the course will be a historiographical assessment of some narrow subset of witchcraft studies, either as a traditional paper or a digital project (options to include, but not limited to, googlemapping and/or timerime of scholarship and sources).

H400 Junior Seminar on Methods and Historiography: Gender in American Culture
Kornfeld
This seminar is designed to introduce undergraduates to historical methods and historiography through a focus on gender in American culture. The primary objective is for each student to become familiar with the range of historical questions, arguments, methods, and types of evidence used by historians of gender in American culture, and to demonstrate their familiarity with these in a culminating independent paper. Students will also learn to write and speak more clearly and powerfully in a seminar setting. During the first part of the semester, the seminar will consider a variety of outstanding recent historical studies of gender in American culture. Students will give weekly oral presentations and complete several short writing assignments based on the readings. In the second part of the semester, students will choose and develop topics for their culminating independent papers about a single issue or topic in the history of gender in American culture.

H450 Senior Seminar in Historical Research: Natural Disasters in World History
Edgerton-Tarpley
As the capstone course for history majors at SDSU, this course prepares students to write a 20-page scholarly research paper based on original research in primary sources. Student papers will formulate and research a significant question about how people from a particular time period and culture responded to, described, made sense of, remembered, and/or drew meaning from a major catastrophe such as a famine, plague, earthquake, flood, or fire. The first several weeks of the course will introduce students to different scholarly approaches to the study of famines and other disasters in the nineteenth and twentieth-century world. Each student will then select a particular natural disaster to research, and a research question to focus on for the final paper.
H532 Revolutionary America
Kornfeld
This course explores one of the most dramatic, controversial eras in American history. Why did the people of thirteen British colonies, whose commercial and cultural ties with Britain far exceeded their interaction with each other, resist imperial reform after 1763 to the point of open war by 1775 and independence a year later? How deep did internal tensions run within and between individual colonies/states? How “revolutionary” were their Revolutionary governments, war, and society? Why did they replace a decentralized wartime union under the Articles of Confederation with a much stronger national government during the peaceful years of 1787-88? In what sense, if any, did the Federal Constitution repudiate the “Spirit of 1776”? Did the Revolutionaries create an American culture? In a seminar format, we will examine the causes, dynamics, and results of the American Revolution, through a combination of recent historical interpretations and primary sources/documents. Students will do individual research for a paper and group presentation on one of our seminar topics: women and Revolution, African-Americans and Revolution, or Native Americans and Revolution. Other requirements include a short midterm paper and a final synthetic paper.

H435 Latin American History through Film
Passananti
This course explores the history of Latin America through the medium of film. Most films are in Spanish (one in Portuguese), and carry English subtitles. Films were chosen to illustrate the great themes in the region’s history. We will compare film depictions of episodes in Latin American history to versions written by professional historians. The films reflect the instructor’s interest in examining the complex relations of power in Latin American history, efforts of actors (individually and collectively) both to dominate and resist.

H620 Comparative Genocide
Frieberg
The 20th century has been called “the century of genocides.” From the 1915 Armenian genocide, through the Holocaust, to Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s we have seen, over and over again instances of wholesale displacement or killings of ethnic, religious, or cultural minorities in areas around the world. By studying these instances comparatively, we will begin to explore several larger analytical themes of the field: 1) definitions and modernity in genocide and ethnic cleansing (Do older instances, such as the displacement of Native Americans constitute ethnic cleansing or genocide?), 2) causes and reasons, 3) “gendercide,” 4) memory and politics in the aftermath, and 5) intervention.

H584 History of Energy
Elkind
This course will explore the history of American energy production and consumption, from the age of wood and whale oil to recent debates over nuclear, solar, and, of course, oil. This year’s Common Experience focus on Energy and a field trip or two will give this course a multi-disciplinary dimension.
H630 Cold War United States and the World
Yeh
This course will introduce a range of cultural, racial, gender, and political discourses concerning the Cold War. The United States has become an unprecedented superpower since World War II. We will pay particular attention to how the US Cold War policies affected the United States domestically and around the globe, especially countries in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. In addition, we will go beyond the world view of the United States and investigate how and why the ideology of battling communism was not prioritized by numerous Third World countries.

H650 Social Conflict and Protest in the Middle East
Kazemi
This course explores major themes in the history of social protest and conflict in the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will analyze the causes, characteristics, and consequences of many different forms of popular strife and protest movements. Students will learn about the social composition, ideology, language, and symbols of protest, as well as social networking, means and methods of communication, and the dynamics of the public sphere in different parts of the Middle East. The material covered in class would be of interest both to students who study the Middle East, and to those who work on conflict, protest, resistance, claim-making practices, or violence in other societies. No previous background in Middle Eastern history is assumed.