Advanced Seminar

All undergraduates at the University of Denver are required to take an Advanced Seminar, an upper-level course capped at 15-18 students.

While knowledge and professional skills found in a student’s major and minor are important foundations for accomplishment, successful individuals also must be able to navigate a complex political, social, cultural and economic environment that challenges more traditionally limited concepts of higher education and competencies. To help students better understand the demands of contemporary life, instructors teach an advanced seminar based in their area of expertise and passion. The topic will be approached from multiple perspectives in a course designed for non-majors. Studying in this setting, students demonstrate their ability to integrate different perspectives and synthesize diverse ideas through intensive writing on that topic. This course must be taken at the University of Denver. Students must complete all other common curriculum requirements before taking the Advanced Seminar.

Advanced Seminar courses meet four criteria in terms of writing.

1. Students will write a minimum of 20 pages (about 6000 words), some of which may be informal, but some of which must be revised, polished and intended for an educated readership.
2. Students will complete a minimum of three writing projects that are distributed over the quarter; exceptions might include a cumulative project completed in multiple stages.
3. Students will be required to revise some of their work based on feedback from their professor.
4. There will be some instructional time given to writing.

Courses

ASEM 2401 ‘Extreme’ Philosophy: Major Philosophical Issues of the 21st Century (4 Credits)

This course involves an exploration and critical assessment of several of the most important 21st century philosophical issues: the "Doomsday Argument," the "Singularity Argument," the "Simulation Argument," and various views surrounding the possibility (and probability) of extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI). There are no prior knowledge prerequisites; all necessary background information will be presented in the course. Enforced Prerequisites and Restrictions: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements. However, students may enroll under special circumstances with prior permission of the instructor.

ASEM 2403 Versions of Egypt (4 Credits)

Students examine foreign and native descriptions of Cairo and Egypt, written over the last 200 years. This course is, at a basic level, a means of traveling to another country and culture. The course studies the effects and after-effects of colonialism and the way Europeans and Americans understand themselves in relation to Islam.

ASEM 2404 Music Preference, Identity, Genre, and Recommendation (4 Credits)

Students examine the relationship between music preferences, personality, and identity. Because music preferences are strongly mediated by cultural industries and institutions, students also examine two of the music industry's tools for connecting listeners to their preferred music: genre systems and a more recent tool, automated music recommendation engines. The course includes three medium-length papers and many written responses to scholarly writing drawn from music psychology, musicology, and music informatics.

ASEM 2409 Performing India: Performance, Ritual, and the Indian Body Politic (4 Credits)

This course explores "performance" as an organizing principle of Indian cultural, political, and religious expression. We delve into the shared poetic and spiritual experience of the performer and spectator as a foundational aspect of performance that fundamentally shapes the Indian body politic. This interaction between spectator and performer functions as a guide trope as we examine the Pan-Indian oral performance tradition through the transmission, rewriting, recasting, regionalization, and politicization of canonical Indian epics, the "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana".

ASEM 2410 Science & Religion in Dialogue (4 Credits)

This course examines the relationship between science and religion. Our key question is "What is the best way to understand or construe this relationship?" We begin by attempting to identify and, then, dispel certain popular "myths" about science and religion. Then we turn our attention to the life, the scientific discoveries, the religious commitments and struggles of Charles Darwin. Darwin's career is the perfect entry point for considering much broader issues in the relationship between science and religion. Darwin's evolutionary theory fundamentally shaped modern science. But in so doing it also raised significant challenges to traditional religious belief, particularly in Christian communities of faith. For that reason, Darwin is as controversial today as he was 150 years ago, especially in (tho’ not limited to) America. With that foundation, we shall be in a position to wrestle with a quite recent, thorough-going reassessment of the science/religion debate, one that is both critical and constructive. Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2416 France and Germany: From Carnage to Community (4 Credits)

Today, much to the United Kingdom’s chagrin, the European Union is dominated by a closely cooperating “dyarchy” of the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. Go back a century, however, or two or three, and you find France—whether republic (1909), empire (1809), or kingdom (1709)—preparing for war with Germany (1909) or catching her breath between campaigns against various German states (1809, 1709). Hundreds of years of European history are marked and marred by increasingly devastating collisions between these two proud nations. When we review and appreciate that bloody “back-story,” their present harmony, indeed on many important matters their unison, is an astonishing outcome, which this course attempts to explain, examining implications for the future of Europe, of the Western alliance, and of the world.
ASEM 2417 Cultural Dynamics-African American Music (4 Credits)
This course examines the cultural and psychological functions of various genres of African American music both historically and in contemporary society. The course is built around the thesis that various forms of African American music—e.g., the spirituals, the blues, gospel, jazz, rap—have served common functions in the culture historically (even while serving distinctive needs at different points in history), and have all served as core features of both African American culture and, more broadly, American aesthetic sensibility.

ASEM 2421 War and Peace in Japanese Film (4 Credits)
War and Peace in Japanese Film looks at Japanese films of the 20th century as documents of the transformation of Japan from an imperialistic and aggressive state to something quite different. It considers contrasting interpretations of Japanese film, ranging from orientalist stereotyping to postmodern critiques of standard categories. The course examines the work of established directors like Kurosawa and Ozu, but also newer filmmakers and challenges too-narrow cultural preconceptions.

ASEM 2422 Textual Bodies: Discourse and the Corporeal in American Culture (4 Credits)
This course explores how bodies acquire meanings, and how those meanings are created, represented, disseminated, or contested through discursive and embodied means. Course practices include close readings of literary, philosophical and visual texts; creative and auto-ethnographic writing exercises; and in-class dance-based movement drills. Prerequisite: Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2424 Poetic Minds (4 Credits)
How do we know who we are? How do we know what is real? How do we decide what is right? In this ASEM, course participants will trace these key questions from Enlightenment philosophy to British Romantic literature and, finally, to their echoes and afterlives in contemporary literature.

ASEM 2427 Mid-Century Mod, Redrawn (4 Credits)
Studying the art history of the mid-20th Century is not an exercise in nostalgia but a study of the way we think, communicate, and innovate. Artists like Grace Hartigan, Tadeusz Kantor, and El Anatsui illustrate creative labor in a rapidly changing, globalizing world. This course, designed for all majors as part of the advanced seminar common curriculum requirement, takes in part its inspiration from MoMA’s initiative Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives, which aims to redraw understandings of modernism within the purview of global art history and larger cultural framework, including social, political, economic, and intellectual. The course reconsiders the 1950s and 1960s and the notion of “modernity” from multiple geographies and identities: Western and Central-Eastern Europe, Latin and North America, and Africa.

ASEM 2436 Life and Death (4 Credits)
In this course, students examine several of the moral issues concerning the circumstances under which it is appropriate for humans to bring about life or death. For example, is it morally permissible to bring about, and subsequently destroy, human life in a petri dish? Is it permissible to bring about the death of people who have killed others? We examine and evaluate others’ responses to such issues. En route to answering these questions, we pay significant attention to the scientific and empirical factors relevant to which moral responses we should have and to the legal factors determining the actual policies we do have.

ASEM 2438 Music and Language (4 Credits)
Music and language are two of the most complex and powerful communication systems shared by humans globally. Drawing on methods and theories from anthropology, ethnomusicology, cognitive psychology, and literary theory, students in this seminar explore the music-language interface from interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives.

ASEM 2453 London and Media: Then and Now (4 Credits)
This seminar explores London’s “popular” and “high culture” media in the 19th and 20th centuries. Taking advantage of both the University of Denver’s online databases and London library holding, students explore a number of the major 19th century London-based British newspapers and journals that proliferated after the abolition of the Stamp Tax in 1855. Students explore significant differences between popular and high culture in 19th century newspapers and journals that target different audiences. Simultaneously, students read articles from contemporary London newspapers. They have a constant commentary on contemporary issues to counterpoint the 19th century readings. From these parallel readings, students discover not only similarities and differences in key issues but also learn how rhetoric, style, diction and voice differ between 19th- and 20th-century journalism. Class discussions and writing assignments focus on comparisons between 19th- and 20th-century topics, intended readership, style and rhetoric.

ASEM 2458 Satire in the Arts & Media (4 Credits)
This class explores how satire, in its myriad manifestations, juggles immediacy and universality in the cultures and time periods in which it is born. The course’s interdisciplinary nature makes it unique, and its celebration of satire as a discipline that traverses a multitude of forms gives the course an exciting, dynamic quality.

ASEM 2460 Latina/o Religious Traditions (4 Credits)
This course is organized around the broad question: Is there enough commonality in the texts (including cultural texts) we have studied to organize and name a singular field of social relations we can rightly call “Lainta/o Religion?” This course engages and excites students by enabling them to study religious traditions in an academic place removed from direct faith commitments. Toward this end, we will view art, hear music, watch films and talk to religious leaders.

ASEM 2469 Imagining the Amazon (4 Credits)
Representations of Amazonia often invoke images of either an earthly paradise or a green inferno. This course begins by challenging students to critically (re)frame their images of the Amazon by underscoring the unequal power dynamics that have come into play whenever outsiders have represented the landscapes and the peoples of Amazonia over the past 500 years. Using a variety of theoretical paradigms, students in this course study representations of Amazonia created both by indigenous writers and activists, as well as several widely disseminated (and critically heralded) novels, films, and journalistic essays created by ‘outsider’ authors and auteurs from Latin America, the U.S., and Europe.
ASEM 2481 Witchcraft & Renaissance Drama (4 Credits)
Witchcraft and Renaissance Drama traces how the rise of the witchcraft panic in England is reflected in and fueled by several venues of cultural production in England from 1558-1621. The course takes an historical journey through the laws against witchcraft, the witch trial transcripts, the emerging gender pamphlet wars and the popular drama as all manifestations of how the metaphor of witchcraft served to address several cultural fears of the transition between Early Tudor, Late Elizabethan and Early Jacobean to explore how the drama both responded to and shaped the development of the Witch craze.

ASEM 2482 Africa (4 Credits)
In this course, we study the literature, politics and culture of Africa from pre-colonial times to the present. We begin by examining Africa as the locus of the world's oldest civilization and by discussing some key moments in African history. We then focus on the four regions of Africa, on country- or region-based examples of culture and politics in Africa—such as colonial rule in East Africa, war of independence in North Africa, military rule in West Africa, Apartheid in Southern Africa. We also discuss Africa and the world, or Africa in the context of modern-day globalization. In each case, we discuss historical accounts and literary representations as well as political and cultural contexts.

ASEM 2486 Chaucer's London (4 Credits)
This course is a study of the medieval London - the people, customs and social order--by looking through the lens of the great satirist of the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer. We read a few of the Canterbury Tales and some medieval documents that give a fuller picture of medieval London. Our focus is on seeing the medieval origins of the modern city, and comparing the medieval cosmopolitan city with the cosmopolitan city of the early twenty-first century. In addition to reading original documents and secondary research on medieval London, we take virtual trips to Canterbury, the medieval university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, the medieval cities of York and Norwich, the Museum of London, and learn about the historical significance of the Tower, Westminster Abbey, Guildhall, Inns of Court, and St. Bartholomew-the-Great.

ASEM 2488 Exploring Contemporary Art "in situ (4 Credits)
Exploring Contemporary Art "in situ" is an exploration of contemporary artworks situated in galleries, museums, and public sites in greater Denver. Students will closely observe artworks by various living artists and read them as primary texts to which they will respond with their own writings in contemporary social media. The course will meet on location at least once each week to be in the presence of the source art works.

ASEM 2491 Art and the Environment (4 Credits)
This course takes an historic approach to a discussion of art and the environment. While certainly we could go back to the integration of art and its environs in the Prehistoric period, this class focuses on the contemporary art world.

ASEM 2492 Animals and Human Societies (4 Credits)
This course considers human-animal relationships from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Focusing on Western Europe and America, we explore the many ways in which people interact with non-human species—killing them for pleasure, eating them, observing them and caring for them—and the effects of these interactions on both animals and people. Thinking about animals sheds light on crucial issues in today's society, with implications for everything from environmental change to the impact of consumer culture to the ethics of euthanasia.

ASEM 2494 Global Ecology of America (4 Credits)
Ecology is the science of interconnections, and "The Global Ecology of America" encourages students to think anew about the ways the United States interconnects with the rest of the world. As the word "ecology" suggests, our primary focus is on environmental interconnection. This class is concerned with both communities and environments. It seeks to make students more aware of the essential links between the two, and it also seeks to shed light on the often unseen or ignored ways our lives, as Americans, shape—and are in turn shaped by—the lives of other people in other places all around the planet.

ASEM 2501 The Addictive Self (4 Credits)
This course examines the interconnections between addiction and the formation of the sense of self or "self-identity." Students construct a working theory of addiction in relationship to selfhood, considering narratives of addiction, and explore the stories not only of alcoholism and drug addiction, but also of food and "process" addictions. The course explores the texts and issues involved from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including especially those of psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism cultural theory and philosophy.

ASEM 2516 Do the Wicked Prosper? (4 Credits)
This course revolves around a question, which is famously quoted from the Bible, "Why do the wicked prosper?" The quotation presupposes that the wicked do prosper, but many strands of human thought challenge the supposition. This course examines the students' reactions to this question and leads them to approach the question and their reactions to it from a variety of academic perspectives.

ASEM 2517 Prostitutes of the Pen and Novel: 18th Century Women Novelists (4 Credits)
This course investigates the writings of 18th Century British women authors, focusing on the historical and cultural contexts surrounding their work, which was often stigmatized. It explores how these authors contributed to the development of the novel even as they created a profession for themselves at a time when economic, political, legal and educational policies limited women's opportunities. Prerequisite: completion of all other Common Curriculum requirements.

ASEM 2518 Exploring Italy (4 Credits)
This class combines a seminar meeting throughout fall quarter with two weeks travel to Italy following exams. Students focus on the art and literature of Rome, Florence and Venice in preparation for their travels. Students concurrently enroll in Excavating Italy (ARTH 2613 or ENGL 2613) as a co-requisite.
ASEM 2519 Music of Southeast Asia (4 Credits)
This course examines traditional, popular, and diasporic musical genres in Southeast Asia, using that lens to explore more broadly how music and culture interact on a critical global scale, drawing on histories of colonialism and power. From Javanese court gamelan, to Thai Luk Thung, and from karaoke among immigrant Vietnamese communities in the United States, to Malaysian shadow puppet theater, the course explores the varied and diverse region that is Southeast Asia. It examines both classical and popular musical traditions, approaching music not from a music theory perspective, but rather from an ethnomusicological standpoint—drawing on cultural studies, history, sound studies, critical theory, anthropology, sociology, and religious studies. Content includes music and performances, academic articles, first-hand accounts, and documentary films, focused on topics in music, dance, genocide, and social and political movements. Students will develop writing, listening, thinking, and oral skills. No formal music training or previous musical experience is required for this course. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements. However, students may enroll under special circumstances with prior permission of the instructor.

ASEM 2520 Contemporary Theory and Art (4 Credits)
This course examines continually changing theoretical perspectives that have influenced culture, using artworks and artists to understand those theories and their influences on creation and interpretation. A larger concern is how these perspectives affect contemporary world views and how we have arrived in the current cultural climate; to those ends, the course offers a broad overview from Enlightenment thought through Postmodernism. While these theories circulate among various discourses in philosophy, physics, sociology, psychology and politics, the main focus and example is how art and culture have moved through this epoch. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements. However, students may enroll under special circumstances with prior permission of the instructor.

ASEM 2521 Representations of Youth: The Case of Italian Fiction (4 Credits)
This class explores broad questions about the representation of youth and adolescence, using the lens of fictional representations of youth in Italian literature and cinema of the 20th and 21st century, especially contemporary Italy. In addition to studying novels and films, the course will feature historical and sociological sources (including from youth studies), and will provide tools for a methodological approach to storytelling. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements. However, students may enroll under special circumstances with prior permission of the instructor.

ASEM 2522 Social Change and Interview-Based Theatre (4 Credits)
Theatre for Social Change is the practice of using theatre for or with a community with the intention to create social change. It is one of several types of community-based projects designed for these ends. This course uses case studies and readings from theatre, social work, and international education to explore perspectives and complexities of this work, including issues of design, implementation and evaluation, as well as larger themes of ethics, aesthetics and representation, from the perspectives of both facilitator/theatre creators and participating populations. The course fosters broad conversation on participatory action research and its place within social change and community-based initiatives. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements. However, students may enroll under special circumstances with prior permission of the instructor.

ASEM 2527 Life’s Aim (4 Credits)
How do our everyday activities and our short-term goals, like graduating from college and finding a job, fit together with some of our less concrete and more long-term concerns like finding happiness and meaning in our lives? Is there some way to understand our daily activities as coherent with and supportive of these overarching goals? Using philosophical, literary, psychological and economic texts, this course consists of an examination of the conceptual dichotomy of means vs. ends and the role that it plays in our analysis of human activity.

ASEM 2531 Culture of Desire (4 Credits)
Sex—we talk about it all the time. Talk shows, online, in magazines, in plays and music, sex shows up everywhere. Why do we expend so much energy on something that, in most cultures, isn’t really discussed much in public? And what is sex, exactly? How do we define it? How do we legitimize sex, and why have we decided to categorize people as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual? What structures have we developed to make us conform to those categories, and what discrepancies have we chosen to ignore? Why is it problematic to base arguments about relationships on historical evidence? In this course, students find out answers to these questions, answers that will lead to even more questions and problems.

ASEM 2532 Death & Dying in Hindu Traditions (4 Credits)
This course explores the meanings of death and dying in Hindu perspectives. The inevitability of death has led cultures throughout the world to speculate on what happens to the individual during, at the moment of, and after death. Until the modern period, religions have typically been the first or only place where people turned for answers to basic questions of existence: What happens at death? Will I and the people I love disappear forever? Or will we continue on after death in some way? Is this the only life we have? What is the relationship between the life we lead now and what happens at and after death? These kinds of universal questions have led to culturally specific and conditioned answers and speculations, some of which we will examine in this course.

ASEM 2535 The Multiracial Individual (4 Credits)
This course explores the historical racial tensions in the U.S. that have made it difficult to acknowledge the reality of multi-racial peoples in its midst, and traces the trends in culture and national consciousness that made it possible for a change to occur in the 2000 census. We survey the varying ways in which multiracial people have been regarded by the larger society in different social contexts, as well as the ways in which the sociological, psychological and political dynamics of multiracial identity have changed over time and have impacted the experience of multiracial people themselves.
ASEM 2542 Knowledge and Ignorance in Contemporary Scientific Practice (4 Credits)

Over the last few decades, an increasing number of scientists, philosophers, historians, and sociologists have emphasized that the traditional depiction of science as a progressive accumulation of true - or approximately true - descriptions is an oversimplification. We have come to realize that the right kind of ignorance and failure can truly be a gateway to success, to deeper understanding. But how is this possible? What kind of failure can be turned into knowledge? How does science deal with ignorance? How does one use ignorance to its advantage? This course provides a long answer to these questions. Specifically, it recasts some classic philosophical issues by bringing attention to a widespread scientific practice that can be aptly called "black-boxing." The course examines and illustrates these issues with some prominent episodes in the history of science, from fields ranging from biology and psychology to economics. Beyond completing the Common Curriculum, there are no prerequisites for this course, which is introductory in character, presupposes no previous acquaintance with philosophy, the natural sciences, or the social sciences, and is entirely self-contained.

ASEM 2550 Music, Gender, and Sexuality (4 Credits)

Can music express gender and sexual identities? When a small group of scholars tenaciously raised this question in the 1990s, it created a contentious moment in the study of music history. Students will trace this lively debate through seminal interpretations of classical and popular music while honing listening and interpretive skills. Prior study of music is not required.

ASEM 2555 India and Historical Film (4 Credits)

This is a course that utilizes films, fiction and writings of professional historians to explore themes in Indian society and culture such as the colonizer 'self' and the colonized 'other', the mechanisms of difference whether based on race, gender or religion, the processes of identity formation through national movements or community ties, real or imagined, and the quest for modernity through economic development and societal reform.

ASEM 2556 Social Media (4 Credits)

Social media enable individuals to create, collaborate, and share messages with networks of all sizes. They are also tools for surveillance that are radically changing how governments and corporations engage with publics, challenging long established notions of privacy, freedom, and civil liberties. This course introduces students to the historical, economic, legal, and cultural context of social media and explores the ways we shape and are shaped by these emergent and ever-changing tools.

ASEM 2557 Body & Sexuality in Religions (4 Credits)

This course examines the unique place of the body in biblical religion. We ask how the Bible and its interpreters have shaped current views on sex and the gendered body in Western society. How has the Bible been (mis)used in relation to current understandings of the physical body? Is the saying that a "human" does not have a body, but is a body as true for the Hebrew Bible as the Christian New Testament? How has Judaism and Christianity (de)valued sexuality, procreation and celibacy? How do the biblical traditions shape our modern opinions about the ideal physical body and body modification? How can we understand "out-of-body" experiences and notions of death and afterlife in Western religion? Students are encouraged to interpret the Bible and their own beliefs from a uniquely embodied perspective.

ASEM 2562 Modern and Postmodern Music (4 Credits)

Students explore multiple musical styles and genres, primarily from the 20th century to the present, as they develop new cognitive pathways for experiencing all music. The course devotes substantial time to developing a vocabulary of descriptive terms that apply universally to music even outside the modern and postmodern subject matter.

ASEM 2566 Society Through Literature and Cinema (4 Credits)

This course will study the interconnection of human societies (or nation states) as evident in different kinds of narratives. Discussing literary and film narratives in particular, we will examine the beliefs and influences that shape relationships within the same society as well as the beliefs and influences that shape relationships between different peoples and societies. Our examination will include an exploration of how these beliefs and influences are generated and modified. Our study will be aided by the interpretive insights of artists and visionaries. Our examples will be taken from different regions of the world.

ASEM 2567 Violence, Law, & the State (4 Credits)

This class is built on interrogating arguably the fundamental issue facing every state: how to deal with violence. Through a mix of academic readings, films, documentaries, and reputable media, we will consider a range of issues regarding violence and the state in the modern world. The three organizing themes for the class are understanding the lived problems of violence, the nature and value of freedom in relation to violence and the state, and the question of how law relates to violence and the state.

ASEM 2568 Outsiders in Italian Fiction (4 Credits)

This class addresses the recurring representation of the character as an outsider in the Italian literary and cinematic tradition of the 20th and 21st centuries. Novels, theatrical plays, and films will be supplemented by a collection of secondary sources on psychology and sociology, providing the tools for a correct thematic and methodological approach to storytelling.

ASEM 2572 Philosophy, Psychology, Neuroscience, and Free Will (4 Credits)

This seminar introduces students to the topic of human freedom from the perspective of philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology. If everything that you do and have ever done is the inevitable byproduct of the political, social, economic, cultural, familial, psychological, and neurological forces at work within and around you, in what sense could you be free and morally accountable for your actions? In what sense could you be worthy of praise for your accomplishments and blame for your failures? The course will address the topic of free will using contemporary scholarship in philosophy, neuroscience, and developmental and social psychology, and we will ask questions such as: What, exactly, is free will? What can our understanding of causation tell us about free will? What is moral responsibility, and how is it related to free will? What brain processes underlie our decisions?

Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum requirements.
ASEM 2576 Art, Thought, Spirituality (4 Credits)
This course examines the close and complex relationship between esthetic expression and private religiosity, or "spirituality." The course will examine how theories as well as personal accounts of artistic creativity, experience and appreciation can both broaden and deepen our understanding of the inner life that is otherwise communicated in religious terms and how artistic expression can also have a quasi-religious or "spiritual" character. The central objective will be to illumine the way in which the construction of the individual self and the formation of the personal identity are intimately tied to different quests that are artistic and spiritual at once.

ASEM 2577 Cultural Intersections (4 Credits)
In this course, we explore the dynamics of cultural reception or the translational dimension of modern culture, particularly the reception of narratives within particular cultures and beyond. Our main focus is the principles that integrate and divide people along the lines of race, class, ethnicity and culture. Our journey involves studies of cultural contacts, contexts and narratives from Africa and the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

ASEM 2578 Travel Writing Through the Ages: Exploring Italy and the Self (4 Credits)
A panorama of the evolution of the Travel Writing genre shows how different travelers have interacted with foreign environments for centuries and provides students the model to create their own travel journal. The course focuses on travel narratives to, from, and within Italy. The reading list includes Italian and American writers such as Christopher Columbus, Margaret Fuller, Mark Twain, Carlo Levi, Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco. Excursions to different parts of Italy, visits to historical sites and museums and screenings of relevant Italian films complement the class.

ASEM 2579 From Literature to Film (4 Credits)
In this course, we examine the adaptation of literary works into films. We closely study selected modern literary works and the film interpretations of each work. Focusing on the transition from one narrative form to another, the course enhances the critical skill of students as well as their creative ability with respect to cinematic translations. We, therefore, also have mini scriptwriting workshops as a way of imaginatively highlighting the sort of considerations that go into the making of the film script.

ASEM 2580 Celtic Identities and Nationalisms (4 Credits)
Every March 17th, millions of people around the world engage in invented rituals of drinking, parades, & music in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Summer finds Scottish Highland Games enacted by kilt-wearing, bagpipe-playing, Celtic-culture aficionados across the English-speaking world. The European Union has funded Celtic-History Trails & sites across Western Europe to link itself to an earlier period of 'unification.' Millions of people claim Celtic heritage and ancestry in the U.S.A. and across the globe. But what does that really mean? Who is entitled to claim such identities? Who is not? How do people reconcile 'Celticness' with other elements of individual, national, and group identities across the globe? This course uses Celtic identity as a means of engaging students in a critical examination of the meaning and process of identity formation. Students identify, compare, and evaluate the methods used to define and claim legitimate and illegitimate definitions of "Celtic" identity espoused by past and current nationalists, musicians, archaeologists, political scientists, historians, governments, film-makers, shopkeepers in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Europe.

ASEM 2582 Latina/o Identity & Community (4 Credits)
This course analyzes the complexity of Latinos' unique social position, using an interdisciplinary approach to understand the construction, maintenance, and change of Latino identity and community formation over time in the United States. As students will learn, Latino identity in the U.S. has experienced a continual process of negotiation between dominant discourses—regarding gender, race, politics, economics and culture—and the socio-political and cultural histories of their own communities. Accordingly, we explore the variety of ways in which identity and culture are socially constructed and actively contested, with particular regard to the diversity among and within Latino groups.

ASEM 2590 Interpreting the Holocaust Through Film (4 Credits)
This course takes students on a journey from Nazi Germany to the present day through the lens of the camera. We examine how the Nazis used film to convey their messages, explore the varied experiences of those who lived during the time of the Holocaust as depicted in films, view movies that address various ethical dilemmas presented to Jews and Gentiles as a result of these trying times, and discuss the ways that the Holocaust has been represented and memorialized through films in more contemporary times.

ASEM 2591 Indigenous Approaches to Gender and Sexuality (4 Credits)
This course introduces various ways that indigenous communities in the U.S. and Canada have understood and attempted to navigate issues of gender and sexuality in a religious context. It introduces foundational understandings of gender and sexuality that inform both Western and Indigenous cultures, and it explores the fundamental differences between those understandings. The course also presents emergent theories that challenge assumptions common within the Euro-American tradition. Through research and writing, students add to the contextual breadth of the class.

ASEM 2604 Russia: Revolutions & Utopias (4 Credits)
This course examines Russian culture and society from the late 1800s to the 1930s, when Moscow and Saint Petersburg/Petrograd were synonymous with cutting-edge and avant-garde, staging revolutions—and dreaming of utopias—in politics, art, sex and science, to name but a few areas. The course compares the ideals of those times with Russia today as well as with developments in Western Europe and North America.

ASEM 2606 Japanese Film (4 Credits)
This course examines some of the most iconic films in the Japanese cinematic tradition in order to identify and critically engage in narratives of Japanese aesthetics and cultural identity, especially ones that take culture as the site for locating tradition and/or modernity. No previous knowledge of Japanese or film required.
ASEM 2609 Literature of Nature and Apocalypse (4 Credits)
Concern about the declining state of the environment has been a topic of longstanding interest, from Henry David Thoreau to John Muir, and writers like Edward Abbey, Ernest Callenbach, Louise Erdrich, T.C. Boyle, Octavia Butler, Cormac McCarthy and others. This writing intensive course examines questions relating to environmental activism and social structures predicated upon technological and materialist culture. It considers how American writers have reassessed the relationship between religious beliefs and notions of utopia and apocalypse. It examines and analyzes timely and relevant historical, literary, and philosophical issues relating to the current state of the environment.

ASEM 2615 Disease in World History (4 Credits)
This course examines the social and political impact of disease in global history, and also considers how understandings of disease have changed over time. Participants will explore topics from the relationship between religion and medicine at the time of the Black Death; to early twentieth-century tuberculosis and the social stigma of the disease; to the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s, and debates about the wisdom of pursuing disease eradication; to Ebola and its significance in the broader global health inequities of the modern period. Students will not only learn about the history of disease but will also learn to evaluate historians' arguments about disease and its significance.

ASEM 2629 Truth and Treason in the Cold War (4 Credits)
This course takes an intensive look at American history from 1945 to 1955 in order to investigate the relationship among international relations, domestic politics, and American culture. While anticommunism was perhaps the preeminent influence over American politics and culture, this course also investigates other related cultural developments, such as the moral and cultural anxiety resulting from the revelations of the Holocaust and Stalinism, the anguish represented by the height of existentialism in American thought, the exploding popularity of abstract expressionism, the gradual growth of consumerism, and the effects of the baby boom.

ASEM 2633 Literature of Trauma (4 Credits)
This course examines the relation between memory, trauma and history in postwar American literature and culture, as those have become major themes in novels and films. The works examined in this course provide us a window into experiences of victims of trauma, while extending the possibility of forming a more sensitive and inclusive conception of American history and culture. Readings include literary works and a selection of secondary critical and historical texts. Completion of all other Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this course.

ASEM 2640 New England: Myth and Memory (4 Credits)
The subject of this course is historical memory or, to put it simply, the relationship of the present to the past. Historians take for granted what has been called "the invention of tradition," but most people do not appreciate the constructed nature of the past and do not recognize the possibility that there have been (and continue to be) contests over which version of key historical events or movements is to be disseminated to the public. This course focuses on region—New England—and its racial history as a case study of the process of fabricating historical memory. New England's history is particularly useful for this purpose because the region has had an inordinate impact on our national history.

ASEM 2646 Dance in India (4 Credits)
As a discipline in which the body is trained to become "naturalized" in very specific ways, dance tells us much about the culture in which it is a part. Dance movements and meanings also become sites of conflict during periods of cultural transition, and yet because of dance's ephemeral nature, its relative adherence to tradition, or lack thereof, is difficult to ascertain, and thus often hotly contested. This course explores the tension between change (innovation) and continuity (tradition) in four different forms of dance from the Indian subcontinent: Bharata Natyam, a classical dance form from South India; Kathak, a classical dance form from North India; Bhangra, a folk dance form from Northwestern India; and the mass-mediated, syncretic form of dance predominant in the Bollywood film industry.

ASEM 2652 Conspiracy Theories and Contemporary Culture (4 Credits)
What have become called "Conspiracy Theories" (CTs) have been around since some of the earliest human narratives but have only quite recently been studied as a distinctive phenomenon. Underlying this explosion of popular interest in CTs are a number of intriguing philosophical, psychological and socio-political issues that reveal a great deal about how social discourse is pursued, formed, circulated and empowered (or disempowered) in the contemporary world. In this course, we will view this broad phenomenon of CTs from three different perspectives: (1) philosophical, (2) psychological, (3) social and political.

ASEM 2657 Harry Potter and Esotericism (4 Credits)
Today's students have grown up with J. K. Rowling's seven Harry Potter books. This incredible publishing phenomenon has inspired children and adults alike to devour 500-page books within days of publication, at a time when statistics seem to indicate that people are no longer reading. Why would these tales of English school children learning a curriculum of magical skills have so captured the imagination of a generation of young people living in a post-modern world? The purpose of this class then is to examine the role of esoteric themes that pervade the Harry Potter books and to investigate the history of those subjects from the Middle Ages to the present, by focusing on the visual traditions they inspired. Areas discussed include the history of magic and witchcraft, classical and Celtic mythology, alchemy, astrology, fantastic beasts, "books of secrets" and their healing properties, the mythic lore of botany, divination and various esoteric paths of enlightenment.

ASEM 2661 The French Revolution (4 Credits)
This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of the French Revolution. Students learn about the many ways in which the Revolutionary decade of 1789 to 1799 marked a significant break with the French past—politically, socially and culturally. Yet these profound changes could not occur without some continuities. Students reflect upon political, sociological and philosophical questions that make the Revolution relevant today: How do democratic values take root in a traditionally monarchal society? Can these values be exported to societies without democratic traditions? Are liberty and equality compatible? How are nations defined? Can people thrive in a strictly secular—or fundamentalist—society? What is the role of violence and war in effecting political and social change?
ASEM 2662 Testimony, Memory and Allegory: the Representations of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (4 Credits)

This course investigates how the Cultural Revolution serves as a critical link of the Revolutionary Era (1919-1980) and Reform Era (from 1980 on), via closely and critically examining various representations and surreal fiction, melodramatic and avant-garde cinema, lyric poems, music and visual arts. Although much of the material discussed is socio-politically oriented, the focus of the course is within the realm of literary and cultural criticism. This course explores complicated and often interwoven relationships between testimony, memory, signs, meanings of both writing and reading about traumatic events of the Cultural Revolution, ethical (personal and communal) commitment to memory and the engrossing historical, literary and artistic representations of the past expressed in different media. By doing so, the course reveals how each representative account copes with its producer’s distinctive memories of the Cultural Revolution and, more importantly, responds to the cultural and political contingencies of the producer’s time, as well as the artistic conventions of the producer. As such, it functions not only as a connection to the past but also a reconfiguration of the present.

ASEM 2664 Contemporary Issues in Africa (4 Credits)

Through the study of a variety of literary, visual, and oral cultural artifacts, this course will investigate contemporary issues of gender identity, education, development, and political culture in different areas of the African continent.

ASEM 2665 Occupied France in Perspective (4 Credits)

This course deals with the Occupation of France during World War II. Students, throughout the course, learn to understand, describe and articulate selected crucial aspects of this four-year period of military occupation. This course examines the question of the image of the Resistance and Occupation in cultural memory; this is a much studied and debated issue today, and forms the conclusion to the course. Forms of collaboration and resistance are very much in question in historical, cultural and literary debates today.

ASEM 2667 Magic and Religion (4 Credits)

The course examines, first, magic and witchcraft described in the Hellenistic world, India, and Medieval Europe and, second, magic and witchcraft in twentieth-century settings in the Upper Nile and rural France. The course also includes a study of twentieth and twenty-first century esotericism and occultism. Magic practices include pragmatic rites that cause effects ranging from love to murder, astrology-based medicine, conjuring and transacting with invisible creatures, creating power-bestowing diagrams, consecration of amulets, deploying and removing curses and disease, and weather control. Witchcraft includes sorcery and counter-sorcery rites, divination, and folk medicines. Magic is usually described as opposing religion, but the religious lives of most religious people contain magic practices; therefore, studying magic is a tool for studying cultures in both theory and practice. Research projects engage a magic practice to garner insights into the culture or cultures that circulate such lore.

ASEM 2670 Development in Latin America (4 Credits)

This is a writing-intensive course centered on examining in a critical manner the continued efforts made by several countries in Latin America throughout the 20th century in promoting different projects of national economic and political development. Among other topics, we analyze the incorporation of Latin American countries into the international economy and the consolidation of its local oligarchic regimes (circa 1880s to 1930s); the importance of populism and elite pacts (of the 1940s and 1950s) for the promotion of industrial programs; the process of radicalization of the left, the democratic breakdowns and the ensuing military rule (of the mid-1960s and 1970s); the transitions to democratic rule (1980s); the implementation of market-reforms (1990s); and the current challenges for democratic consolidation.

ASEM 2672 The Berlin Republic: Germany since 1990 (4 Credits)

For roughly two decades, Germany, a once divided nation in the heart of Europe held responsible for World Wars, has been re-united. Forty years of division between West- and East-Germany—a division exacerbated by their respective geopolitical roles in the Cold War—left its mark on what many intellectuals considered a ‘cultural nation’ in spite of their political separation. This class examines the pains and gains of twenty years of unity, a process that has repeatedly been described as an attempt to “normalize” Germany’s complicated history. We analyze various political, historical, but mostly cultural developments (and debates) that have accomplished and, at times, questioned this unification.

ASEM 2677 The Sixties: Swinging London (4 Credits)

Most of us are familiar with the main images of the 1960s in Britain, miniskirts, Mods, scooters, hippies, free love, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and James Bond. Considered the great decade of change, students’ parents and other baby-boomers look back on it with nostalgia and the media continues to romanticize the period as being more innocent than today. Yet scholars continue to argue about the degree to which the Sixties really changed British society. While popular culture was clearly departing from that of the pre and immediately post-war era, many scholars from various disciplines assert that these changes, including the rise of the music industry, the teenager and youth culture, consumer-oriented society, spy literature, gender and racial issues found their roots in the post-war experience. Other scholars assert that the decade was dominated by contradictory impulses and that the major changes were uneven and often on the surface. This course traces the major themes of the period, including the rise of popular youth-based consumer culture, an unfettered media in Fleet Street, the center of world fashion-Carnaby Street, espionage literature on the page and on the screen, race and immigration issues, challenges to gender norms and sexual ‘liberation’, Britain’s changing position in the world, the end of the British Empire, and the redefining of British national identity. These themes are investigated using a variety of sources including popular and documentary films, personal memoirs, novels, primary documents, secondary literature, fashion, poster art and other non-traditional sources.

ASEM 2679 Thinking, Eating, and Writing: Food History (4 Credits)

Nearly everything related to food and drink has a fascinating history: origins of dishes, food habits, customs, traditions, manners and modes of consuming food. This course integrates academic and some popular histories of food with student-created histories based on research, experience, and observation. Students read widely to understand the production of knowledge in food history and its vast scope, from a range of approaches, including theoretical, geographical and topical. Students engage in exercises to strengthen skills as historians and produce original archival research.
ASEM 2680 Jewish Literature of Latin America: Tradition and Innovation (4 Credits)
This course examines Jewish presence in Latin America from colonial times to the present, focusing on Jewish writers in Spanish America throughout the 20th century and considering Jewish-Brazilian and Jewish-Latino writers, Jewish themes in non-Jewish Latin American literature, and the various waves of Jewish immigration to Latin America. This course considers how they helped shape their specific communities and their responses to assimilation, state-sponsored anti-Semitism and Aliyah. Topics to be discussed include assimilation vs. integration; the construction of Jewish and national identities; and anti-Semitism in literature, film and political discourse. The course integrates critical readings alongside the literature, specifically in the areas of trauma and representation. No knowledge of Spanish is required, as the language of instruction is English and all required texts are available in English translation.

ASEM 2682 Strange Beasts: Nuclear Japan (4 Credits)
This course is a critical examination of literary and popular culture from Japan's experience of the Atomic bomb, through the "economic miracle" years of the 1960s to the present, focusing on the paired themes of humanity and monstrosity in nuclear experience during the acceleration of technological change.

ASEM 2683 Bad Girls, Riot Grrrls and Misbehaving Women (4 Credits)
This course introduces women who subvert mainstream expectations of femininity and explore misbehaving as a means of self-definition and empowerment in popular culture. From "Bad Girl" artists and the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s, to current day roller derby skaters and burlesque queens, the course traces the intersections of feminist art, DIY (do-it-yourself) approaches, creative production, performative outlets and socio-political consciousness. Unladylike behavior is explored as a strategy to articulate personal, social, political and cultural identity.

ASEM 2685 Religion and Filmmaking (4 Credits)
This course examines film and television representations of religions from around the world in an effort to understand the goals of the media makers and the effects of their productions. The techniques, theory and rhetoric of the films viewed are dissected and discussed. The course enables students to participate in critical, yet respectful debates about the cinematic mediation of religious concepts.

ASEM 2688 Music and Consciousness (4 Credits)
This course explores ways of framing and defining individual and collective responses to musical arts, and, in turn, how understanding these responses can lead to a broader view of human consciousness. Through studying different musical cultures (and subcultures), students critically examine their own musical preferences and respond to other's aesthetic positions. Students explore 20th-century musical writings and compositions; examine themes of development, change, unity and variety in different musical genres; entertain musical manifestos written by various composers and musicians; and write their own "musical constitution.

ASEM 2692 Philosophy of Migration and Global Citizenship (4 Credits)
The 21st century is already being described by many as "The Age of Migration." This course explores the implications of mass global migration for the political philosophies of citizenship on which sovereign states are founded. Is something like a global citizenship possible? This seminar offers a cross-disciplinary perspective on this and other related issues. Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2693 The Unfathomable Russian Soul: Identity and Self-Perception in 19th Century Literature and Culture (4 Credits)
This course explores Russian identity and the idea that it resides in the "unfathomable Russian soul" that defies rational explanation. Students examine how classic Russian authors (Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev) imagined and shaped "Russian soul" in their dialogues with Western European cultures and Russia's native traditions (folklore, Orthodox Christianity). Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2694 The Golden Age of Musicals (4 Credits)
This course maps and analyzes the developments, constructs, creators and canonical works of the musical theatre genre up to and through its formative, formidably period known as the "Golden Age" (c. 1943-1964) as well as the genre's wider social/cultural implications and contemporary relevance. Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2695 Religion and Politics in China (4 Credits)
This course explores the concept of "religion" in the political history of modern China. Students gain new insight into two concurrent and divergent historical processes--state-driven secularization and religious revival--in China and Taiwan. Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2698 Justice, Legal Obligation and Judicial Decision Making (4 Credits)
This course provides students with an introduction to the major theories of judicial decision-making and the basic philosophical problems involved in understanding the concept of how law binds citizens, especially judges, in a liberal democracy. Completion of all Common Curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2715 Belonging in America (4 Credits)
Who belongs in America? Who is on the inside/outside, and why? How do we define, experience, maintain, reject, and embrace our own insider/outside status? Finally, how do American novels and dramas conceptualize and dramatize the many negotiations involved in belonging? This course explores the social, cultural, and experiential aspects of belonging in America. Completion of all common curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.
ASEM 2716 Tango: Border Crossings in Art, Race, Gender, and Politics (4 Credits)
This course is a study of the appeal of Argentine tango and why a dance so closely linked to one culture appeals so intensely to people with such different cultural identities. We consider competing answers from academics in many fields — from gender, film, and rhetorical studies to art, politics, and dance — as well as testimonies of dancers and teachers, in Buenos Aires and from around the world. Completion of all common curriculum requirements is required prior to registering for this class.

ASEM 2720 Nazi Germany: History, Literature, Culture (4 Credits)
This course explores Germany's Nazi era. It focuses on themes like redemption, temptation, national community, conflict and memory while analyzing both texts and visuals from and related to the period. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements.

ASEM 2723 Contemporary Art in Context (4 Credits)
This course examines key trends that have shaped contemporary art and considers how artists have turned to traditional media such as painting and photography and created new forms of art through performance, social media, and digital technologies to produce aesthetic and physical experiences that reflect on contemporary life. Prerequisite: Completion of all other Common Curriculum Requirements.

ASEM 2729 Seduction and Satire in British Women's Novels of the 18th Century (4 Credits)
This course explores how fiction by 18th century British women relates to larger themes of gender (and genre) construction. What is the gender of the novel in the eighteenth century? Why do these female authors make sustained use of the seduction narrative, and how do they work to combine it with more traditionally “masculine” forms such as satire? Are they conforming to or subverting received notions of femininity with such use?.

ASEM 2730 Queer Lives in Musical Theatre (4 Credits)
Musicals are one of the most popular forms of American theatre, commonly considered family friendly and mainstream. However, since its beginning musical theater has also been strongly connected to queer culture. Through watching and listening to musicals as well as studying queer theory, students identify and analyze depictions of queer life throughout musical theatre history.

ASEM 2734 Music and Spirituality (4 Credits)
At a time when “spiritual” music appears in a wide variety of contexts such as churches, yoga studios, raves, and radio broadcasts, “Music and Spirituality” explores individual and collective perspectives on music and transcendence, and teaches how a deeper understanding of those perspectives can lead to a broader view of meaning in human experience.

ASEM 2736 Spirituals and the Blues (4 Credits)
This course examines spirituals and the blues, two song forms from the canon of African American music. A multifaceted approach (both historical and analytical) reveals the ways in which the music is transformative, healing, and liberating, as well as providing a vehicle for agency. The course also studies the music’s larger sociopolitical landscape.

ASEM 2739 Can College Teach Reasoning? (4 Credits)
In the last several years, colleges and universities have made national news with a series of controversies over diversity, inclusivity, and free speech. Many commentators see free speech at odds with diversity and inclusivity. Those who stress the importance of free speech on campus often embrace an idea with a long philosophical history: the “thinking cure.” According to this line of thinking, a principal task of education—particularly higher education—is to teach critical thinking. A well-functioning university (not to mention a well-functioning democracy) is a marketplace of ideas where participants are free to rationally debate the issues of the day. The best ideas will eventually win out. People need the skills to debate rationally, which education should provide, and the freedom to deploy those skills in arguing for their versions of the true and the good, which educational institutions and the courts should protect. This course aims to understand and critically analyze this line of thinking through the lens of philosophy, empirical psychology, and contemporary journalism. Can we really be trained to reason in the way that this line of thinking requires? The course considers arguments that emphasize the limitations on our ability to reason, arguments that we are frequently subject to (sometimes insuperable) biases. We examine how these arguments bear on the aims of education generally, and on free speech provisions in particular.

ASEM 2741 Music in Science Fiction Film (4 Credits)
This course examines music and sound design in science fiction film 1895–2015, exploring key concepts and practices in music, and placing films studied in social and political context, as well as the aesthetic and technological trajectory of the genre. The course addresses recurring themes in science fiction, as well as the impact of new sound technology, non-traditional orchestration, and sound effects on the development of the film genre. The course presumes no prior specialized knowledge of music or film.

ASEM 2745 American Jews, Zionism, and Israel (4 Credits)
It is often taken as a given, by both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans, that American Jews have always supported Zionism and, since its creation in May 1948, supported the state of Israel’s actions. However, the historical relationship between American Jews, Zionism, and the state of Israel has been complex and multifaceted. This course examines and analyzes this historical relationship from multiple perspectives, beginning approximately fifty years before the creation of the state of Israel, while also paying attention to recent shifts in the ways in which contemporary American Jews relate to and view the state of Israel.

ASEM 2746 Music and Disaster (4 Credits)
This course examines the role of music within the context of disaster. Understood to be catalysts for artistic expression, disasters produce musical expressions related to trauma in myriad forms. Following an historical overview of large-scale natural and man-made disasters and the kinds of music produced in relation to them, we examine how disaster figures into the production and consumption of music in Haiti, New Orleans, Indonesia, South Africa, Cambodia, Uganda, and in the Post-9/11 world. The course additionally examines music as a tool in social justice, considering how music provides social commentary, critique, and a form of social activism. Students understand how music and disaster are historically intertwined, and how music shapes understandings of conflict and catastrophe. No previous musical experience is required.