HONR392 Seminars for Spring 2019

Section 2: Why Do They Hate Us? Understanding the Myths, Realities and Limits of the “American Empire” – K. Jaggers

In “Why Do They Hate Us?” we will explore the tension between how Americans perceive themselves and how, and why, the rest of the world perceives us in a different, and often less flattering, light. At its core, this course will focus on the uneasy relationship between America’s liberal political culture and institutions and the power-centric and nationalistic ideals that have traditionally governed our country’s foreign policy. Particular emphasis will be placed on the motivations and tactics that have fueled America’s expansionist ambitions over the past 200 years and the forces, both domestic and foreign, which have sought to limit both the size and scope of the “American Empire.” In this course we will also examine both the political and moral implications associated with being the world’s first global “empire” as well as the social, economic and political forces contributing to the rise of anti-American sentiment and political action throughout the Islamic world.

Section 3: The Beat Generation Writers – A. Merline

The Beat Generation is a term used to describe both a group of American writers who came to prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the cultural phenomena that they wrote about and inspired. This class will explore the influence of the legendary group of American writers who came to prominence during this era who challenged the values of American society after World War II, and paved the way for the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. We examine the lives and literature of Neal Cassady (Collected Letters), Allen Ginsberg (Howl, Kaddish, America), Jack Kerouac (On The Road), and William Burroughs (Naked Lunch) and other minor poets and poetry that exemplify this generation of writers.

Section 4: Abraham Lincoln: What’s Up With That Hat? – P. Vaughan Knaus

Abraham Lincoln once described his life story as “the short and simple annals of the poor. That’s my life, and that’s all you or anybody can make of it.” We know differently. Yet, America’s sixteenth president remains an enigma: both beloved and despised, depending upon where one’s sympathies lie. Did he unduly exceed the boundaries of Executive Privilege, alienating nearly half of the country? Was he a devout humanitarian possessing a genuinely ethical nature, yet still able to justify taking the United States to unspeakable devastation? The truth, as is generally the case, lives somewhere in the middle. Let us explore the man, the myth, the legend. Our task is to discover for ourselves just who was Abraham Lincoln? What forces guided his decisions and edicts? Was he a man of faith? Of uncommon intellect? Of tremendous self-doubt and physical shortcomings? Lincoln said about himself: “Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher but that was all.” Yet, he gave us his poignant First Inaugural and eternal Gettysburg address. The spirit that guided him most may be that of his Second Inaugural Address, now inscribed on one wall of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C.: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds.” Our class has a rare opportunity to revisit history as it was being made. David Donald’s definitive work, Lincoln, serves as foundation for evidence, discussion, and even argument. Presentations will vary tremendously, and may include topics such as Lincoln’s service in the Black Hawk War or why his hat was the size and style that we’ve come to recognize as distinctly “Honest Abe’s.”

Section 5 & 6: You’d be Murdered for This: Art, Political Regimes and Morality – S. Zwick-Tapley

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Imagine a painting so scandalous you'd be imprisoned. Imagine a play so threatening you'd be tortured. Imagine a book so controversial you'd be exiled for life. Imagine a film so revolutionary you'd be killed. Throughout history art has challenged dictators, religion and sexual norms and has been blamed for the destruction of morality and civilization. What are these works of art and what made them so threatening? And did these works of art succeed in bringing about the change so feared? This class will explore controversial art from around the world and look at the political, sociological, and psychological frameworks specific to each culture. Art forms covered will include theatre, dance, the visual arts, film and literature. (Warning: The material in this class may be offensive to some students).

Section 7: Contemporary East Asian Cinema – H. Chung

This course is not a survey of the entire history of various Asian cinemas; rather our focus will be exclusively directed to films made in Japan, Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea in the past four decades. We will examine how the global/local geopolitics specific to the post-Berlin Wall era (the dismantling of Cold War institutions; the passing of authoritarian regimes; the boom and bust of the Asian economy; the international popularity of Asian art and genre films) have influenced the reshaping of New Asian cinemas across borders. Attention will be also given to specific genres, such as the samurai film, the martial arts film, animation, the historical drama, the family melodrama, the social problem film, the horror film, queer cinema, and “extreme cinema.”

Section 8: Friendship in the Western World: Ancient Greece, Modern and Contemporary Perspectives – A. Archie

The purpose of the seminar is to critically analyze the ancient Greek conception of friendship (i.e., Plato and Aristotle) in relation to modern and contemporary conceptions of friendship. According to Aristotle, friendship has to do with the self. Thus, in reflecting on friendship we enter upon self-discovery. In contrast to the ancients’ preoccupation with the self, modern and contemporary reflections on friendship tend to focus on rules and acts. The main question of the seminar is, “Which position on friendship is more compelling: the ancient Greek, modern or contemporary position?”