

Fall 2018 Complex Problems Courses

Note that some courses have restricted enrollment:

*AUSC = AU Scholars | CBRS = Community-Based Research Scholars | UC = University College
Transfer Students*

Tips for choosing a class:

- Complex Problems is a chance to explore – find a subject that interests you even if it may not seem related to your major
- Search this document for key words that align with your interests, such as “gender,” “economic,” “justice,” “health,” “environment,” or “technology”
- Use [EagleService](#) to check the seminar schedule
- This list may be subject to change. The most current information is always available on EagleService

How are Latinxs Changing US

Instructor: Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador

This class adopts a less Western-centric way of framing knowledge by focusing on a U.S. ethno-racial minority group within the U.S. Latinxs are shifting the economic, political, cultural, and social landscape of U.S. society. Latinx communities bring forth questions of nation and ethnicity, along with intersectional aspects of class, gender, sexuality, ability, and migratory/documented status to a discussion of who the U.S. is as a nation. Students will hear leaders of local organizations and advocacy groups, as well as national entities, to better understand the contributions and challenges of Latinxs in the U.S. and will analyze how Latinxs are portrayed in the media through movies and documentaries.

The Nature-Society Binary

Instructor: Dixon, Marion Wood

"Yes," we nod in the affirmative to the statement that we, humans, are part of nature and whatever harms the rest of nature harms ourselves and future generations. And yet, when social scientists study society, we often analyze the social world as acting on, and thus distinct from, nature. And when environmentalists mobilize, they act to protect the environment from human activity. In this course we will delve into this paradox, which necessarily involves multiple and conflicting perspectives on the relationship between nature and society. Specifically, we will explore two present-day cases in which this paradox plays out: Both the Anthropocene literature and biosecurity policies and institutions reinforce the enduring nature-society binary and have invited critiques from scholars and activists alike.

Cities: Destroyed and Reinvented

Instructor: Demshuk, Andrew

Why has urban space been so hotly contested? How has perception of urban space changed? How have power elites erased poignant structures to suit their own politics of memory? This seminar introduces students to dreams and shortcomings in modern architecture and planning, theories of nationalism and

memory, and urban examples from twentieth-century European cities. Our dynamic urban environment in the US capital is also introduced through trips and guest lectures. Critical thinking, reading, and writing are encouraged through intense discussion of weekly readings, the composition of short response essays, and a terse essay/presentation assessing the intersection between urban change and the politics of memory in a context of the student's choice.

Visual Identities

Instructor: Pearson, Andrea

Drawing on museum collections in D.C., this course explores how visual images constructed, claimed, and sometimes contested identities across the geohistorical spectrum. We will consider how images convey identities tied to cultural conceptions about politics, religions, race, gender, disability, and sexuality, and what such works teach us about visual strategies for conveying identity, past and present. We will analyze images comparatively, in a case-study approach across specific cultures. Individual and group projects develop critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills.

Obesity: A Complex Crisis

Instructor: Bracht, John

Obesity is a public health emergency; a majority of Americans are currently overweight and a significant fraction are likely to suffer adverse health impacts including diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and even cancer. This course investigates the ways lifestyle, culture, socioeconomic factors, and the food industry all interface with biology to impact body weight. The course surveys both popular and scientific works relevant to the causes of the obesity epidemic, drawing connections while promoting critical analysis and discussion. This class emphasizes the multifactorial causes of obesity, through engagement with both popular and scientific literature, reinforced through student writing and feedback.

Myth, Fantasy, and Meaning

Instructor: Cox, Chuck

Ancient myths of gods and warriors, modern tales of wizards and superheroes, the legends that accumulate around families and communities: People use stories – especially fantastical ones – to understand reality, develop identities, and share values. In this course, we will grapple with the ways myth, folklore, and fantasy permeate our lived experiences and cultural interactions. Our exploration will involve reading primary texts from many cultures and secondary texts from a range of academic disciplines; through discussions and varied writing projects, we'll unpack how we use the unreal to make sense of the real.

Let's Talk About Sex Education

Instructor: Twigg, Marnie

How do we learn about sex? It's a complicated question with unique answers based on our families, friends, schools, and identities. And despite these enduring disputes, U.S. institutions still have no consistent answers even for whether we ought to include sexual education in our curricula, much less

what such courses should entail. This class will explore these conversations by examining perspectives on sex education from media, history, scholars, and a variety of professionals currently working in the field.

Making Up Your Life

Instructor: Dussere, Erik

Mostly we make our lives up as we go along, and although we might sometimes find it hard to imagine doing anything else, we may also sometimes wish that there was a recognizable narrative that we could point to, or create, in our lives. The purpose of this course, then, is both to reflect on the notion of life history and to consider a few of the ways that books, movies, and people, too, have represented, considered, and plotted out various kinds of lives. To this end, we will be looking at texts that try to imagine what a self is, exactly, and texts that offer useful or interesting examples of lives both fictional and real. We might, for example, consider books by Shakespeare, Freud, Toni Morrison, Tsitsi Dangarembga, as well as films, and utopian or speculative narratives that deal with these issues of life history.

Electric! Music Since Edison

Instructor: Snider, Nancy

How have electronics impacted listening, musical creativity, responses, expectations and culture? These questions will be examined through multiple lenses and disciplines where the intersection of art, science, technology and society meet at a sometimes surprising but undeniable crossroads. The course will offer participants the opportunity to observe, analyze, experiment and even create with electronics. Special attention will be given to the advent of sound in film as well as to new language/vocabularies in music, new sounds as the result of newly designed instruments and synthesis techniques, digital vs analogue applications and, the computer.

Legally Speaking

Instructor: Mass, Michael

Although it might seem that the law provides rules for personal and business conduct that are definitive and clear, in reality the law more often balances complex interests that involve many shades of gray. This course examines a series of legal problems concerning the role of the law in our personal lives as well as in the economic life of our country as part of a community of nations. Although the course examines these problems through a legal lens, it includes economic, business, political and international relations perspectives. Students will critically read, discuss, argue and write with an objective of questioning their own views and gaining an understanding of alternative perspectives.

Ethics, Morals & Criminal Law

Instructor: Engert, Michelle

Inherent within criminal law and justice is the power to make discretionary decisions that greatly impact the accused, victims, and society. Students will discover the complexity of determining what an ethical

course of action or result means to this wide variety of criminal justice actors, and how they draw upon personal bias, experience and cultural context in interpreting what is ethical. The specific issues that will be covered include: the prosecution and defense of both guilty and innocent people; wrongful convictions; just and unjust punishment; criminal prohibition and prosecution of specific drug use, possession and sales; and the criminalization, prosecution, and defense of select forms of marriage and sexual activity. Readings, documentaries, podcasts and the selection of guest speakers are designed to provide students with diverse professional and personal perspectives from a variety of racial, economic, ethnic, geographic and philosophical backgrounds.

You expect me to pay for that?

Instructor: Schwartz, Lara

The concept of choice is a powerful motivator for many Americans, whether it means the right to spend our money a particular way, control our bodies, buy health insurance (or not), or elect our representatives. When it comes to government services and subsidies, however, we do not directly choose how our money is spent; almost all of us pay taxes (sales, income, real estate, or payroll) and our money goes into a common pool to be spent on a variety of things that we might or might not want, use, or agree with. This creates complex problems for governments at the federal, state, and local levels and sets up fights and tensions between groups. Our tax code and budget are thus not dry, lifeless documents; they tell a story of our national values and priorities. In this course, we will learn to read, challenge, and analyze this story, and tackle the problem of how to run our governments using everyone's money when we are so divided about what matters.

Food Justice Matters

Instructor: Snelling, Stacey

This course will explore issues related to food justice in the United States. Students will be introduced to foundational issues including recommended components of a healthy diet, the connections between diet and overall health status, food economics, and basic features of food production. The course will also help students examine ways that race, class, age, and access impact food and health. They will then be encouraged to evaluate a variety of complex issues associated with food justice.

Act Like a Man

Instructor: Kippola, Karl

This course examines the search for and performance of ideal models of American manhood on theatrical, political, and social stages. Through investigating gender theory and masculinity studies, reading and analyzing plays, viewing theatrical productions and films, unpacking political posturing, and scrutinizing human behavior, students explore, demystify, and question the ways in which public masculine figures manipulate, challenge, and reflect lives of American males. From the first American play to Hamilton, from the Founding Fathers to Donald Trump, the course investigates the ways in which American men learn to behave and misbehave.

Jihad: From the Caliphate to ISIS

Instructor: Omar, Sara

What exactly does jihad mean? No Islamic concept has generated as much disagreement and as many questions as jihad, a concept that is now in common use in Western media and literature. The purpose of this course is to deconstruct the concept of Jihad as it has been appropriated by Western media and radical Islamists, both of whom have propagated the myth that Islam and the West are at war. Students will be exposed to the various meanings, nuances, theories, and manifestations of jihad from the Prophet Muhammad's time, through the age of the Caliphate, and into the present.

Immigrant America

Instructor: Dondero, Molly

As in centuries past, immigration continues to transform U.S. society and remains a hotly debated issue that presents complicated economic, political, and social challenges. This course will examine the complexities of contemporary U.S. immigration through three core questions: Who immigrates and why? How do immigrants and their children adapt to U.S. society? Does immigration create social and economic benefits and/or burdens for the U.S.? To address these questions, students will use readings, film, guided discussion, and critical writing to engage with a wide range of themes including motivations for immigration, immigrant integration, racialization, citizenship, immigration policy, and attitudes toward immigration.

The Material World

Instructor: Harshman, Nathan

This course explores the matter that has mattered to humans, from stone and bronze through semiconductors and nanostructures. Individuals, cultures, and nation-states flourish and decline based in part on the material resources and technology they can access and control. This course is half about material science, investigating the atom-stuff that we and our world are made of, and half a critical investigation of materialist theories of culture, history, economics, and politics. The primary student assessment is a portfolio demonstrating an integrated understanding of scientific and technical material into social, historical, artistic, economic, philosophical and political contexts.

Understanding Sex and Gender

Instructor: Doperalski, Adele

For many individuals gender and sex mean the same thing. If you are born with male reproductive organs, you are a male and vice versa for females, but for others, sex assignment and gender have a complex relationship. Students will be introduced to the biological basis of sex and explore what it means to be male and female. This course offers students the opportunity to explore this topic from the cellular aspect to the neurological aspect as well as in the context of evolution. We will not only look at the science behind sex and gender, but also consider the societal implications and how this has shaped politics and policy in the modern era.

Maxing Out Planet Earth

Instructor: Alonzo, Michael

How many people can our planet support? This course will explore the controversial ways in which humans use technology (e.g., large dams, GMO) and policy (e.g., energy subsidies) to support more people with higher qualities of life. We will dig into these controversies with readings such as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* and Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert*, movies including *Chinatown*, and field trips to visit DC think tanks and a nearby sustainable farm.

Defining American

Instructor: Cohn, Elizabeth

What does it mean to be an American? Analyzing historical as well as contemporary trends, we explore American ideology, institutions, and society, and how these inform and reflect an individual's personal identity as an American. We look at concepts of patriotism, nationalism, democracy, individualism, equality, capitalism, American Exceptionalism, the American Creed, and the American Dream. We explore the role immigration has played in America's history, as well as how some see it currently challenging America's identity. In our journey, we will expose myths and come to a more complex understanding of what it means to be an American.

Food Energy Water Nexus

Instructor: Fox, Doug

Food, energy, and water resources are interconnected, so addressing one resource will cause scarcities in others. This complex problem requires innovative, cooperative, and interdisciplinary solutions utilizing the skills from multiple disciplines. The next generation must be equipped with sustainability and resilience strategies for the food energy water nexus, requiring interdisciplinary approaches. Natural scientists, engineers, social scientists, economists, policy makers, and diplomats must work together to form an international collaboration for addressing these resource scarcities simultaneously.

The Threat of Chemical Weapons

Instructor: Costanzi, Stefano

Research and development efforts in the field of chemistry have significantly enhanced the quality of human life. However, they also pose threats to global security, since highly toxic chemicals can be employed by States and terrorists to develop deadly weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. Crafting successful policies that minimize the threat without hampering the development of peaceful applications is a complex task that requires understanding the science of chemical weapons, knowing their history, and being aware of the current state of the affairs. This course introduces students to scientific concepts from the disciplines of chemistry and biology and gives them the opportunity to analyze and critically discuss: a) historical aspects related to the development and deployment of chemical weapons; b) international frameworks for their control; c) the current discourse on events and issues in the chemical weapons arena in news outlets and social media.

Education: Problem or Solution?**Instructor: Kravetz, Katherine**

While there is agreement that education is key to individual and community well-being, much controversy exists over education's goals and how to achieve them. With a focus on K-12 education, we will study challenges and effective solutions. How do social, economic and political factors interact with education? Is our society asking too little of education -- or too much? What can citizens, educators, and policymakers do to make a difference? Students will engage with each other, a variety of speakers, site visits, and readings, and will discuss key issues such as school choice and testing, as we collaboratively explore this complex topic.

Wildlife Conservation**Instructor: Heather Heckel**

The World Wildlife Fund recently reported that total wildlife populations declined over 50% between 1970 and 2010. Students in this course explore the primary causes of habitat and wildlife loss including consumption, pollution, and climate change. Students then engage with diverse political, economic, and social approaches to preserving and protecting the remaining biodiversity. Students actively and personally consider how individuals and their communities can communicate about and contribute to wildlife conservation.

Living and Dying in DC**Instructor: Young, Jessica**

This course introduces students to health inequities and will use political, economic, historical, and sociological analyses of differences in power and privilege as it relates to quality of life, disease burden, and mortality in Washington, DC. Through local texts, site visits, discussions, and reflections, students will explore how DC residents, communities, health care providers, public health practitioners, and policymakers have shaped the social forces that influence health, and how they have worked together to ensure that all DC residents have the opportunity to live healthy and long lives. We will also ask critical questions about how we can support efforts to improve health in DC, including how to support and elevate community voices in shaping the factors that impact the health of DC residents.

Normalizing Bodies**Instructor: Zurn, Perry**

This course examines the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" bodies and investigates the complex ways in which abnormal bodies become "problems" for medicine. Looking at historical examples, e.g. pathologization of slaves' desires to flee captivity, nineteenth century diagnosis and treatment of "hysteria," medical treatment of height (tallness in girls, short stature in boys) and atypical sex anatomies (intersex bodies), we will ask what normality means, and explore the effects of meanings we may too often take for granted. Students visit the Smithsonian Museum of American History to speak with the curator and specialist of disability, and hear guest lectures on normalizing surgical interventions for children.

Futures: What will be in 2040?**Instructor: Carmel, Erran**

Universities teach about the past and the present in depth, but what about the future? This course's dual goals are to develop an anticipatory future consciousness and to equip each student with practical methods and first-hand experience in a futures study. Future awareness comes from thoughtful reading, discussions, and guests; Future methods are qualitative, including creation of future scenarios, and a first-hand future study at a local organization. Technology is the key driver of future changes and hence students are expected as a prerequisite to have successfully reengineered their own DNA and driven a vehicle using a brain-computer interface.

Constructions of Self and Other**Instructor: Doud, Tim**

Establishing one's identity(s) is both real and invented. How one reads other's projected identity(s) in a multi-platform culture is complicated, not only by how people adorn themselves, but by our media choices. From avatars on social media (Instagram, YouTube, Tinder) to online simulation platforms (Open Simulator and SecondLife), and from fan conventions (Otakon, Comic Con) to festivals (Afropunk), notions of the constructed self destabilizes conventional models of the singular identity. Using an interdisciplinary and inter-media approach, this course introduces the ways people shape their identities across a variety of cultural perspectives.

21st Century Silk Road**Instructor: Nakshbendi, Ghiyath**

How will the revival of the Silk Road via the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative increase the connectivity between nations and facilitate trade to the benefit of all parties when each country has their own political, cultural and economic systems? This course will discuss past, present and the future evolution of globalized commerce via the Silk Road. With sustainability and stabilization at the forefront of many countries' statecraft planning, this course will better equip students to think critically and develop their own part in the world ahead through reading materials, weekly current articles, guest speakers, and visits to institutions in the Nation's Capital.

Tactical Urbanism**Instructor: Kiechel, Victoria** *Section designated for Transfer Students*

Home to two-thirds of the world's population, cities are contested, even violent, grounds, embodying social, political, and economic exclusion. This class employs an emerging "Right to the City" challenge to the status quo of urban power dynamics: tactical urbanism. Through the collaborative design of our own tactical urbanistic intervention in Washington, DC, we will seek to understand the possibilities/limits of this approach in moving the world towards more just and inclusive cities. We will draw on historical and contemporary sources and case studies, including urban film, music, philosophy, and literature, and theories/examples of urban planning and form.

Social Justice or Libertarianism?

Instructor: Merrill, Tom *Section designated for Transfer Students*

Social justice activists and libertarians are two of the most familiar social types in our polarized political climate. The course asks students (and the instructor) to think through their own political identities by working through some of the most important texts in this debate in constant conversation with the best arguments on all sides. We will read well-known contemporary proponents of both points of view such as John Rawls and Robert Nozick as well as authors who speak to this issue from unexpected angles such as Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglass, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and Kurt Vonnegut. Activities may include trips to Brookings Institution, the Cato Institute, or other think tanks, and a discussion of college education in prison with a local prison reform nonprofit.

Jerusalem: Myth, History, Modernity

Instructor: Brenner, Michael *Section designated for Transfer Students*

Central for the three Abrahamic traditions, Jerusalem has been a locus of worship and dispute for over two-thousand years. The course proceeds thematically, beginning with the role of Jerusalem in the mythic imagination of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students then turn to writings reflecting the history of Jerusalem as a physical place and a source of contention for the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Persians, the Romans, the empires of medieval Europe and the Ottomans, the British, the Arabs and the modern State of Israel. Finally, the course turns to the modern era and examines Jerusalem as a modern city and a proxy for disputes over identity, culture, language, and religion. Students visit different places of worship in DC and invite guest speakers representing a diversity of cultures to class.

Contemporary World Cinema

Instructor: Middents, Jeffrey *Only open to AUSC*

This seminar will examine questions of contemporary world cinema from multiple perspectives by working back and forth between concepts of examining single, individual texts and broader, globally relevant contexts. As part of that project, each student will study in detail a single international film of their choice made between 2002 and 2017. In addition to traditional writing and research projects, all students will craft an audiovisual essay – that is, a short 5- to 7-minute film that visually presents their argument concerning their film. No previous editing experience required.

Pollution Solutions

Instructor: Meiller, Jesse *Only open to AUSC*

Air pollution, water pollution, land pollution! In this course, students pursue issues surrounding pollution in the environment including how and why pollution occurs. We will investigate the sources of various air, water, and land pollutants and look at environmental and health effects and potential solutions. Students will participate in and benefit from diverse assignments including case studies,

debates/ role-playing, peer-teaching, and facilitated discussions on assigned readings from written texts, documentaries, and topic-specific exhibits.

Dying, Death, & the Afterlife

Instructor: Oliver, Martyn *Only open to AUSC*

What does it mean to die? How does death happen? And, what happens after death? This course examines the agony of dying, questions about how we measure death, and accounts of a possible life after death, drawing upon philosophical arguments, biological measurements, literary imaginings, and religious visions in order to understand how the experience of death is a core component to our shared human experience. By evaluating the many differing accounts of death and the afterlife, this class will assess how our understanding of these experiences yields insights into our conceptions of justice and ethics, divine reward and righteous punishment. This exploration of dying and a possible second life thus reflects back to us an idea of our common concerns and struggles in attempting to make a life of meaning.

Cultures of Corruption

Instructor: Bates, Shawn *Only open to AUSC*

Political and social leaders accuse each other of it, and are accused by a media that itself is then condemned for it. It is tweeted, re-tweeted, articles are written, journals published, and blogs devoted to it – but what is “Corruption”? And how has the mention of it become so pervasive, while there seems to be no set definition or even direction? When does a “favor” become “corruption”? There are governments accused of being kleptocracies – governments of organized thieves composed of individuals whose only goal is to legally take as much money and resources from others as possible in order to enrich themselves. This kind of corruption seems easy to define. But what about a payment to a border guard to let you pass? This course will examine values, systems, and institutions across the globe - and down the street.

Global Hip-Hop & Resistance

Instructor: Dibinga, Omekongo *Only open to AUSC*

This course will explore one enduring question: Why and how has hip-hop become equally a tool for revolution and capitalist expansion across the world? As hip-hop has attained the interest of corporate America, it has gone from being vilified by many in the mainstream to a source of expansion for American ideals. As hip-hop began to emerge in other countries, it also began to develop its own country-specific narrative. Across the globe, the effects of hip-hop can be felt from politics and education to pop culture and religion from the Arab Spring to the whitewashing of history books in Japan. This course explores how hip-hop has become a source of revolution and capitalist expansion for some of the world’s most marginalized (and not-so-marginalized) populations.

What Causes Homelessness?

Instructor: Kerr, Daniel *Only open to AUSC*

It does not take long traveling across Washington, DC to encounter people experiencing homelessness. This course will explore the phenomenon of homelessness by drawing upon scholarly work done in history, sociology, anthropology, geography, and public policy. Furthermore, students will meet with advocates for the unhoused, as well as people experiencing homelessness themselves. Students will read and critically evaluate texts addressing the issue from across these disciplines. They will also draw upon existing government and agency reports as well as oral histories as they explore alternative ways that people have come to understand the issue outside of the university setting.

What does it mean to be educated?

Instructor: Gargano, Terra *Only open to CBRS*

There are economic, philosophical, sociological, cultural, and political perspectives surrounding the purpose of education and the pedagogical constructs that guide education. Yet, what it means to be an educated individual varies among cultures and is contextually dependent. Through various forms of storytelling, readings, guest speakers, blog posts, and debates, this course will explore interdisciplinary and international perspectives on what it means to be an educated individual.

Fight Club: US War & Peace

Instructor: Susca, Margot *Only open to UC*

The course will look broadly and critically at the issues of war and peace in U.S. society, focusing on Washington, D.C. institutions that play a key role in both areas. Students will explore both historical and modern issues addressing how the United States creates, maintains and, at times, contributes to a global culture of violence. Students will explore these subjects as they simultaneously work to understand the human cost of war through readings, speakers, films, documentaries and site visits in the city. The course will help students also understand the activist communities at work trying to stop interventions and actions abroad as it also looks at media institutions that play a role in shaping public opinion.

Harsh Justice

Instructor: Johnson, Robert *Only open to UC*

The United States leads the Western world in the use of harsh punishments: life sentences, death sentences, and extended solitary confinement. Each of these punishments is a type of death penalty: life sentence prisoners are sentenced to die in prison, death sentence prisoners are sentenced to be killed in prison, and prisoners sentenced to extended terms in solitary confinement (often in notorious

"Supermax" prisons) are sentenced to what has been described as a living death. As a general matter, conditions in American prisons are uniquely painful and degrading, and have been described by researchers as "dehumanizing," "hellish," and ultimately "unsurvivable" in the face of widespread violations of human dignity. This course considers harsh sanctions and the prison experience in general, from different points of view, drawing on the arts (primarily poetry) and the social sciences (primarily criminology).

Podcasts and Persuasion

Instructor: Oakes, Kristina *Only open to UC*

Have you ever thought about how podcasts influence your knowledge and opinions? Any topic or theme you can imagine has a podcast covering it; they are modern, flexible modes of storytelling. But, the sense of shared experience and bond between listener and host means we are less likely to challenge the purpose, presented information, and analysis. Through listening and analyzing podcasts, we'll explore how podcasts inform and shape our experiences and our understanding of ourselves and others in complex, compelling ways.

International Crisis Management

Instructor: Whitman, Dan *Only open to UC*

Humans seldom seek conflict for its own sake, but nations, regional groupings, and ethnic groups often compete and sometimes clash. In reality, rivalries and conflicts are more often managed than "resolved." The course brings in Washington resources in addressing conflict (embassies, U.S. government, think tanks, regional advocacy groups, etc.) Readings and videos highlight strategy, comparative advantage, anthropological views of conflict, negotiation skills, and "tool kits" for use in a crisis. Simulations of real-life scenarios put students in roles such as governments, multilateral organizations, NGOs, private sector, military, and intelligence organizations. Class modules draw from methods developed at US government agencies, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the United Nations.

Resilience

Instructor: Potter, Cynthia *Only open to UC*

How can individuals grow their own resilience to prevent mood disorders? This course will explore the complexity of preventing mental illness, specifically the mood disorders of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, in the US. Through a mix of readings including the popular press, social media, academic articles, memoir, and self-exploration texts; reflection and active seminars; field trips to view 'outsider art'; and homework on building personal and communal resilience, students will work on two underlying complex problems: how to integrate individual and systemic responsibility for mental wellness and how people change.

Plagues, Plots, and People

Instructor: Marsh, Sarah *Only open to UC*

Diseases, colloquially, are caught, transmitted, and contracted in many different ways: miasmas, bugs, germs, and vectors--to name just a few. How does the language people use to describe illness indicate beliefs about illness? This class studies historical, scientific, and popular accounts of illness to explore this question and others. Students explore whether disease creates immunity or results from lack of it, whether class, sexuality, race, gender, or geography protect against disease or expose people to it, how biomedical narratives of illness inflect cultural practices and social relations, and how the life cycles of pathogenic microorganisms shaped human history. This course's materials include science writing, theory, film, and literature--as well as images and objects from the National Library of Medicine and the Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology at the Smithsonian Institute.

Pollution Solutions

Instructor: Meiller, Jesse *Only open to UC*

Air pollution, water pollution, land pollution! In this course, students pursue issues surrounding pollution in the environment including how and why pollution occurs. We will investigate the sources of various air, water, and land pollutants and look at environmental and health effects and potential solutions. Students will participate in and benefit from diverse assignments including case studies, debates/ role-playing, peer-teaching, and facilitated discussions on assigned readings from written texts, documentaries, and topic-specific exhibits.

Perspectives on Mental Illness

Instructor: Stepanek, Laurie *Only open to UC*

This course explores not only the scientific basis for mental illness and treatment, but also how cultural, political, and economic forces impact mental health policy. Do patients have rights to refuse treatment? How do socio-cultural perspectives of mental illness influence treatment? How should mental illness affect culpability and sentencing in the courtroom? Students will read and respond to narratives by people with mental illness, clinical and legal case studies, scientific review articles and congressional testimony. Students will meet experts in mental health policy and advocacy both in the classroom and on Capitol Hill.

The Art of Decision Making

Instructor: Sicina, Robert *Only open to UC*

Decision making is one of our most important activities in both our professional and personal lives. In this course, decision-making processes will be unpacked and thoroughly analyzed. They will be viewed through the lenses of psychology, business, economics as well as various cultural perspectives to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Students will be guided to see patterns and will come to understand that there are not "right or wrong" approaches but rather "better or worse" approaches to decision making.

Navigating Childhood

Instructor: Palmer, Jane *Only open to UC*

This course focuses on the extent to which inequality and public policy affect a child's experience of childhood. The course draws on historical, sociological and legal perspectives to examine what rights children have (and when they might lose them), the role of the state in protecting children and how the zip code where a child is born may affect a child's life trajectory. The course will primarily focus on children's diverse experiences within the United States, but there will be some content related to international contexts.

Incivility

Instructor: Weis, Lauren *Only open to UC*

In our society, divided by inequality and ideology, many demand civil discourse to solve the problem of incivility. This course challenges our assumptions about incivility and "civil discourse." Course themes may include how ideals of civility connect to language and emotion; how the normalization of civility connects to colonialism, imperialism, and globalization; whether movements employing 'uncivil' practices (suffrage, labor, civil rights, feminist, LGBTQ, disability rights, Occupy, Black Lives Matter) reject civility as an ideal and/or challenge us to think more deeply about truly "civil discourse." Students read texts from disciplines such as literature, philosophy, political science, anthropology, technology studies, gender studies, and sociology.

Depicting the Divine

Instructor: Allen, Joanne *Only open to UC*

What does God look like? Is the divine representable? Is it morally dangerous to visualize divinity? Using DC's rich art museums and centers of contemporary religious practice, this class explores the controversies and orthodoxies surrounding godly representations across geographies, temporalities, and cultures. Drawing on a wide range of sources – from analysis of ancient scriptural texts to engagement with DC community leaders – students will investigate arguments for and against representation of the divine, and analyze the visual strategies used by artists constrained by dogmatic limitations. In a globalized society which regularly witnesses terrorist destruction of religious images, depicting the divine is a complex and ancient problem still relevant today.

Social Media for Social Good

Instructor: Woods, Stef *Only open to UC*

How have organizers, nonprofits and marketers used digital tools to try to make the world a better place? Students will explore the role of information literacy, how to engage those without technological access, whether online campaigns lead to offline action, and hashtag activism. Readings will cover a range of topics, disciplines, and case studies, pushing us to question the role that social media plays in helping the public. No prior experience with social media, activism or advocacy required.

Sex, Power, Human Trafficking

Instructor: Stockreiter, Elke *Only open to UC*

Slavery, or human trafficking in contemporary language, is one of the most controversial and enduring questions in history. Using interdisciplinary and international perspectives, this course explores changes and continuities in the institution of slavery from antiquity to the 21st century. Our explorations across time and space will analyze how conceptualizations of gender, race, and religion shaped various forms of slavery. We will understand how the intersection of power, gender, and socio-economic status has made females particularly vulnerable to enslavement and human trafficking.

The Art of Theft

Instructor: Helfers, Edward *Only open to UC*

From William Shakespeare to Lady Gaga, much of what we consider original art depends on borrowed text, recycled images, and familiar melodies. In this course, we consider questions of creative ownership. Drawing from scholarship by ethicists, cultural critics, and legal scholars, students will analyze case studies in music, film, literature, and visual art. Working in groups, students will be asked to trace intellectual property attitudes within a chosen genre or institution (i.e. Death Metal, Persian Poetry, Pixar Films). For the final project, after meeting working artists in the D.C. area, students will compose a creative work that borrows responsibly.

The West's Problem of Evil

Instructor: Tamashasky, Adam *Only open to UC*

Great minds of every generation have struggled to explain why bad things happen to good people, why humans are cruel to one another, and, especially for the followers of the Abrahamic faiths, how a world can have evil in it if it's been created by a god who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good. We'll discuss the religious origins of the classic "problem of evil," scientific contributions to the discussion, and the legal ramifications of beliefs about evil. This reading-and-discussion heavy course will look for guidance from texts and films nonfiction and fiction (such as philosopher Susan Neiman's *Evil in Modern Thought*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and writings on neuroscience from David Eagleman), along with visits to sites around D.C. (such as the Holocaust Museum).

Prejudice: Who, How, Why

Instructor: Duval, Laura *Only open to UC*

Prejudice is the problem that afflicts everyone else. This course assumes that everyone is prejudiced to some extent (even when having the best intentions not to be) and considers potential origins of prejudice. We will examine the individual, socio-cultural, inter-group and systemic bases of prejudice. Through empirical readings, guest speakers, field trips, film, and even fairy tales, we will consider how prejudice develops, is maintained and can be reduced. Studying the many different theories for the origins of prejudice provides a foundation for a multi-faceted approach to combatting and undermining prejudice in ourselves and others.

DNA in the Digital Age

Instructor: Axe, Jennifer *Only open to UC*

Sequencing the human genome began as a 13 year, \$3 billion, multi-institutional project. Today, you can have your DNA sequenced for just \$79 during the holiday-sale through ancestry.com. If we have advanced this much in just 15 years, what does the future hold? This course will use readings, film, and critical essays to begin by covering the basics of genetic inheritance and work its way to applications such human migration patterns, forensics, and personalized medicine. We will end with a discussion of where to go from here.

International Intervention

Instructor: Cromwell, Alex *Only open to UC*

How does the international community work to support victims of mass violence, injustice, brutal dictatorships, and poverty around the world? Moreover, how has the inaction of the international community (in places such as Rwanda and Bosnia), as well as the recent failures of the West in the Middle East (e.g. Libya), shaped current military, humanitarian, and post-conflict peacebuilding interventions? Through readings, discussions, case studies, and video clips, students will survey interventions in contexts of mass violence where vulnerable populations are at the mercy of dictatorships or rebel groups with little regard for human life and the multiple perspectives associated with how, when, and if international actors should intervene. We will explore the responses of the international community in post-conflict contexts, the interplay between various actors in these contexts, standard processes of peacebuilding, and critiques of these approaches from different disciplines.

Inventing Queer Lives

Instructor: Friedman, Dustin *Only open to UC*

This course examines how dominant understandings of LGBT identity came into being in the Western world and, subsequently, the alternative paradigms for sexual and gender difference that have been offered by racial minorities, transgender communities, and non-Western cultures. Students will encounter literary texts as well as films, historical documents, and perspectives from sociology and anthropology. Assignments consist of various formal and informal writing assignments and class presentations. Students will explore the DC area's queer cultural resources, including (potentially) archives, performances, cinema, and exhibits.

Is Global Citizenship a Dream?

Instructor: Groen, Bram *Only open to UC*

With the recent rise of populism across the Western world, this course will help students with international aspirations to critically examine the emerging issues related to "being a global person." Course readings and team projects explore global citizenry and cover topics such as globalization, the sovereign state, economic interdependence, the global enterprise, ethics, prejudice, and intercultural

skills. Outside class, students have the opportunity to meet global leaders to discuss this course's implications.

Challenges in US (Im)Migration

Instructor: Enchautegui-de-Jesús, Noemí *Only open to UC*

One of the challenges to advancing the debate over immigration in the U.S. is the tension between those who are apprehensive and those who are optimistic about the impact of newcomers on the receiving society. This course explores the challenges of immigrant integration into U.S. society from multiple perspectives. The scope of the course spans from the migrant's personal experience (e.g., why and how leave the home of origin, the stressors of acculturation, a sense of identity in the new homeplace) and changes in the receiving community (e.g., schools, employment, and neighborhoods), to the mutual influence evidenced through attitudes, cuisine, media, and policies.

Juvenile (In)justice

Instructor: Griggs, Claire *Only open to UC*

Juvenile delinquency poses difficult and interesting problems for youth policy and criminal justice policy. This course looks at the misconduct of youths that brings them within the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts, and focuses on the complex problem of whether a youth will stay in the juvenile delinquency system or be waived and transferred to the adult criminal justice system. We will look specifically at the legal, social, and policy determinations and implications of that decision. The course will explore the intersection between legal and mental culpability that is critical to understanding the issue of waiver.

Who's watching you now?

Instructor: Serhan, Randa *Only open to UC*

Surveillance has become a commonplace term, yet it is often dismissed as only the concern of those who have something to hide. In this course, we will explore the various ways we are monitored from birth by the state, healthcare system, employers, and parents, to businesses trying to sell us products. Why do we acquiesce? Who owns these technologies? Who has the ability to resist? And what are the effects on us emotionally, legally, and politically?

Borders, Migration & Globalization

Instructor: Castañeda, Ernesto *Only open to UC*

Borders, migration, and globalization are terms invoked by the media and in everyday conversations; but it is important to dig deeply to understand what these terms mean. This course studies policies and the discourse around border security; the cause and effects of international migration; the origin of the term "globalization" and the theories associated with these phenomena. The course accounts for the social context that explains the rise of these ideas, as well as the push-back against what people see as the negative consequences of international migration and trade.

No Home, No Refuge

Instructor: Sajjad, Tazreena *Only open to UC*

Currently, around 65 million people across the globe are forcibly displaced, many of whom are classified as refugees. Half of the world's displaced are children. The course introduces students to some of the critical issues of forced displacement in the 21st century. It examines some of the ethical and political questions surrounding forced displacement, and pertinent challenges that have arisen including anti-immigrant movements and questions of security regarding the world's displaced. Through memoirs, scholarship, film, and guest speakers, students will have the opportunity to engage with some of the most pressing issues surrounding the crisis of global displacement in our times.

Religion and World Politics

Instructor: Nimer, Mohamed *Only open to UC*

Religious ideas around the interaction between religion, society and state have given rise to competing ideological and nationalist movements in America and throughout the world. Methodically evaluating such case studies as Evangelicals, Muslim Brothers, Zionists, and Hindutva advocates, students will engage activists through readings as well as speakers and field visits. Individually and collectively, students will examine how different religious movements have shaped the struggles for identity, democracy and peace. Exploring these thorny issues experientially, students will find this course is founded on the notion that religion can be a source of harmony and peacemaking as it has been a source of division and conflict.

Reality after Einstein

Instructor: Johnson, Philip *Only open to UC*

What is reality? Seemingly contradicting everyday experience, current theories of physics suggest we live in a quantum universe in which objects exist simultaneously in multiple locations, and where cause and effect, even time and space, may be an illusion. Together we will explore, via discussions, readings, interactive demonstrations, guest speakers, hands-on activities, and experiments, scientific ideas about the nature of reality, critically examining the evidence and arguments for these theories, and debating the implications. Our investigations will be informed by physics, astronomy, computer science, and philosophy.

Place and Politics

Instructor: Houser, Sarah *Only open to UC*

So much of our lives today takes place in the virtual world of the internet that it is easy to forget or ignore the ways in which our physical environment affects our behavior and our self-understanding. This class will explore different theories of place and why it matters for politics. This will include an examination of how architecture and design can create or destroy community, the consequences of

residential segregation, the importance of public space and monuments, the relationship between place and civic virtue and the meaningfulness of boundaries.

Happiness: Pursuit of the Good Life

Instructor: Kelley, Robert *Only open to UC*

Happiness is considered by many to be the ultimate goal in life; indeed, virtually everyone wants to be happy. The American Colonies' Declaration of Independence takes it as a self-evident truth that the "pursuit of happiness" is an "inalienable right" comparable to life and liberty. This Complex Problems course explores what makes happiness so elusive, a problem as true in the age of antiquities as it is today. The course content first presents diverse perspectives aiming to define happiness, then examines individual practices designed to bring happiness to one's life, and lastly assesses larger scale initiatives, such as social policies, behavioral incentives, and the role of institutions in supplying the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Students of this course will engage with these aspects through the prism of their own personal experiences, and along the way confronting and reassessing their assumptions about "the good life."