

# **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS 2007-2008**

## **Fall Quarter 2007**

### **IST-8A-001 Understanding the Scientific Study of Consciousness (4 Units)**

*Evan Fletcher, Center for Neuroscience*

Consciousness has been implicitly the subject of study in the arts and religion throughout recorded human history. But in the last decade it has emerged as an explicit subject of scientific investigation and currently it is a "hot" topic. On the one hand, some scientists see grounds for optimism that a scientific explanation of consciousness will eventually be attained. Neuroscience has localized areas of the brain responsible for specific cognitive tasks. On the other hand, there are doubts, which also seem to have a scientific basis. Results in logic and computational theory suggest to some that the mind is certainly not a computer and perhaps cannot even be completely mimicked by a computer. But some computer scientists disagree! The field is in fact filled with rich controversy. This course will introduce some of the main ideas and controversies in the scientific study of consciousness. In order to do so, we will touch upon the fields of neuroscience, computer science, logic and physics. We will also visit some ideas in the philosophy of mind.

*This course fulfills Science and Engineering Topical Breadth and Writing General Education requirements.*

### **IST 8B-001 War in American Memory (4 Units)**

*Jay Mechling, American Studies*

This course examines how Americans "remember" and memorialize war. The primary testimony is from the soldiers themselves—in letters, oral histories, written memoirs, and documentary photography and video. But we are also interested in the experiences of families on the home front, in the experiences of conscientious objectors and war resisters, and in the experiences of civilians as they engage more public memorials of war, from visits to the Vietnam Memorial to consuming films like Clint Eastwood's recent pair of films, *Flags of Our Fathers* and *Letters from Iwo Jima*. Students will also do oral histories with people-- vets and others--who have memories of wartime.

*This course fulfills Arts and Humanities Topical Breadth and Writing General Education requirements.*

### **IST-8B-002 A Sense of Place in American Art (4 Units)**

*Hearne Pardee, Art & Art History*

This course will examine a variety of approaches to landscape in art, centered on the concept of place. It involves both the interpretation of works of art, and of actual landscapes. By readings, slide lectures, field trips and research on sites in and around campus, students will be made aware of ways in which American artists have dealt with their immediate surroundings, from the wilderness to the big city. Much of our work will involve practice in observation and description, which will lead to consideration of the ways in which art has shaped our perspective on the world around us. While there is no studio component to the class, students will be encouraged to use photography, drawing or video to complement their verbal documentation of sites, and the course will require visual analysis of works of art. These works will serve as a springboard for fresh observations of our everyday environment.

There will be a course reader, including artists' journals, art historical texts, poetry, and writings by contemporary cultural critics. We'll consider the important place of natural landscape and exploration in American art, the influence of Impressionism and photography, and contemporary efforts to integrate nature and design. As an independent project, students will interpret a local site of their own choosing. Grading will also be based on class participation and a midterm exam.

*This course fulfills Arts and Humanities Topical Breadth and Writing General Education requirements.*

### **IST-8C-001 The History of the End of the World (4 Units)**

***David Biale, History***

With the arrival of the new millennium, the perennial question of the end of the world has resurfaced with great urgency. In this course, we will examine the history of this obsession, tracing it from its origins in Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, to medieval millenarian and messianic movements to contemporary American apocalypses. We will read sources from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the Dead Sea Scrolls, medieval writings and, for the contemporary period, several popular novels. The course will also include discussion of a number of films with apocalyptic motifs.

*This course fulfills Social Science Topical Breadth and Writing General Education requirements.*

### **IST 8C-002 Disasters (4 Units)**

***Alessa Johns, English***

In this interdisciplinary course we will consider how catastrophes are represented in fiction, journalism, art, and film from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Focusing on plagues, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, famines, and fire, we will ponder the cultural significance of such devastating events, considering, for instance: how representations of disasters have changed over time; which representations are the most effective; the effects of trauma on victims; the extent to which natural catastrophes are human-made; how different cultures respond to calamities in addition to the ways national identities emerge from such responses; the question of gender and disaster; and the role religion, science, and politics play in the anticipation and aftermath of catastrophic events.

*This course fulfills Social Sciences Topical Breadth and Writing General Education requirements.*

## **Fall Quarter 2007 Seminars**

### **IST-9 Culture, Controversy, and *The Plot Against America* (1 Unit)**

***Faculty Presenters led by James F. Shackelford, Director***

This course consists of a number of faculty presentations on this current topic. Students will respond to these presentations through e-mail journals. This required course is supplemented by small-group discussions offered through IST 8 "Colloquium". The course is graded Pass/No Pass.

**Required of all students.**

## **IST-8 Colloquium (1 Unit)**

### *Community Tutors*

These colloquium sections – held on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday in the late afternoon or evening hours – offer opportunities for tutor-led small-group discussion of the IST 9 seminar presentations and assistance with developing journal topics. Registration information will be available after the first session of the IST 9 Seminar.