NEW and Revised First-Year Seminars (199H1 and 199Y1)
SOCIAL SCIENCES - 2018-2019

SII: Society and Its Institutions

Half Courses

The City In Deep Time: Diverse Perspectives in Toronto’s Past
In this course, students are invited to critically examine central tenets of archaeology and other heritage disciplines in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)-Calls to Action and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Both of these documents have profound consequences for how archaeologists study the past, curate objects and places, and educate a variety of public audiences. At the core of this course is the notion that the character of relationships between governments, stakeholders, archaeologists, and Indigenous communities needs to change. We will explore a variety of perspectives on what this relationship could look like and how that might change the way we think about the city’s deep and rich past. We will visit places of significance in Toronto, consider their place in present and past landscapes, learn from Indigenous educators, and critically examine archaeological materials and documents.
Instructor: Katherine Patton, Anthropology

Sport, Politics, and Civilization
Sports and sport-like spectacles are a source of livelihood, entertainment, and social interaction for huge swathes of the global population. Looking beyond the role of sport as an economic and cultural institution, this course asks students to examine the role that sporting plays and has played in shaping behaviour, social norms, and state performance from the Bronze Age to the present day, with a special emphasis on the socio-political role of sport and spectacle in Greco-Roman antiquity. Topics covered will include the impact of youth sport training on citizen behaviour, the role of the athlete in political discourse, physical education and the productive military body, and sporting spectacles as state propaganda. Students will be required to compare the role that athletics has played in past societies to its role in modern states and to come to historical conclusions based on such a comparison.
Instructor: Sarah Murray, Classics

Trump, the Rule of Law, and the Rise of Illiberal Democracy
This seminar will examine the important idea in our culture of the rule of law—the idea that there is a virtue to having what the state can do to its subjects governed by law. It will investigate concrete examples of what happens when the rule of law is put under stress, as is arguably the case under the Trump administration. It will also examine the way in which these developments are related to the rise of what gets called 'illiberal democracy', a notion celebrated by Victor Orban in Hungary, and by other Central and Eastern European politicians.
Instructor: David Dyzenhaus, Philosophy
Social Relationships Within and Between Ethnic Groups
Social relationships within and between ethnic groups have important consequences in ethnically diverse societies. This course will focus on such relationships in Canada, and in Toronto, while also drawing on research in other societies. How do people develop strong close ties, and usefully diverse weak ties, to people in their own groups and to people in other groups? How do such ties affect a group’s ability to organize to promote group interests? How do such ties affect important individual outcomes including social support, success in getting a good job, political activity, and attitudes towards other groups?
Instructor: Bonnie Erickson, Sociology

REVISED

Half Courses

Computers and Society: Modern Perspectives
Almost all aspects of modern life have been changed significantly by the widespread availability and use of computers. This is true at various scales of computation and communication, ranging from large-scale computational engines to corporate networks to desktop and laptop computers to the internet to tablets and mobile phones.
This first-year seminar reviews technical achievements and interprets their significance in the light of policy, social, and ethical controversies and choices for individuals and for society. Topics will include digital divides, intellectual property, data privacy, system security, safety, identity, community, and effects on work and leisure, war and peace, learning, and health.
Each topic will be addressed in terms of issues for individuals, groups, and society; and the resulting controversies and choices. Students will be required to research one or more topics; to think about them critically based on an analysis of relevant literature; to submit one short and one longer paper; and to do two short oral presentations, one likely in the form of a debate. Choice of topics for written and oral submissions will be driven by student interest.
Instructor: Ronald Baecker, Computer Science

Utopias and Dystopias
This course will explore alternative visions of good and bad ways of constructing social, economic and political orders. It will draw primarily upon fiction, reading novels like The Dispossessed, Looking Backwards, Brave New World, and 1984, but may also use materials from political theory and from the social sciences. Students will be asked to think about how work, income, and power should be allocated, what social norms regarding gender and sexuality should prevail, how children should be raised and educated, and so on. They should be prepared to examine and discuss their own views about such matters in comparison with the views expressed by the readings and by their fellow students.
This is a Social Science course
Instructor: Joseph Carens, Political Science
Year courses

Telling Lies with Maps
How has map-making served deceit and disinformation through the ages? This course examines the use and abuse of maps from many perspectives. It emphasizes the impermanence of political frontiers in history, allowing students to follow the “spatial turn” in historical writing. It explores the subjective side of map-making, asking what map-makers thought was important to include or omit on their maps. And it investigates how a “sense of place” operates in history, animating local autonomy movements, nationalism, and efforts at globalization. This course also integrates historical cartography into the context of other attempts to display quantitative and other kinds of information visually. What makes a good map legible or illuminating? What makes a bad map confusing or deceitful? Are certain kinds of data (e.g. demographic patterns or election results) displayed to best effect in map form, or do maps make it easier to skew the results?

Overall, this seminar allows students to share in the sense of discovery that has inspired map-makers throughout history. It may also help them catch out liars and cheats who, even in today’s global age, still use maps to hoodwink an unsuspecting public.

Jim Retallack, History Department