Lectures / Period 1

ARTS

The Aesthetic of Imperfection in Japanese Art of Zen
KAREN HWANG / Assistant Professor of Art

The Mexican Muralism
The Mexican muralists, working primarily between 1920-1960, produced the greatest public revolutionary art of the XXth century. They were part of the cultural agenda of the Mexican Revolution but their influence throughout Latin America and the United States has been far-reaching and continuous. The muralists were commissioned by the government to cover the walls of official institutions such as schools, ministerial buildings, churches and museums in Mexico City, Guadalajara and other cities that played important roles in Mexico’s history. The group’s work is characterized by its political undertones, often of Marxist nature, and related to the social and political situation of post-revolutionary Mexico.

MIHAI GRUNFELD / Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies

HUMANITIES

Lieutenant Roselli comes to Town
In 1919 Vassar President Henry Noble MacCracken hired a resourceful Florentine, the dynamic and unpredictable Bruno Roselli, who founded the Italian Department and soon made it into the largest Italian program in any American college. Roselli stayed until 1932, making many local friends.

JOHN AHERN / Professor of Italian on the Dante Antolini Chair

The Literature of Discovery:
Explorer Reports and the Mapping of the New World
Narratives and maps proliferated during the Age of Discovery. In this illustrated lecture we will examine what they had in common, and what both can tell us about the expectations and designs that drove the journeys of exploration.

PETER ANTELYES / Associate Professor of English

Homecoming without Home:
Derek Walcott’s Stage Version of the Odyssey
RACHEL FRIEDMAN / Associate Professor of Greek and Roman Studies and Chair of Greek and Roman Studies
From Pockets to Purses:  
**Modernity and the Feminine in 19th-Century France**  
This talk will consider the crucial role of fashionable accessories in defining women's place in nineteenth-century France. By looking at a series of images and texts, we will trace the genealogy of contemporary fashion's most coveted object--the handbag--and find its roots in the performances and transgressions of respectable femininity.  
SUSAN HINER / Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies and Chair of French and Francophone Studies

The Voice of the Lumpen and the Trial of the Ramstein 2  
In the late 1960s and early 1970s U.S. military bases across the globe experienced widespread GI dissent and racial violence. The situation was especially critical in West Germany, where a flourishing collaboration between German student radicals and Black Panther GIs forced both the U.S. and West German governments to formulate comprehensive responses to the crisis.  
MARIA HOEHN / Professor of History

The News of War and the War Over News  
The news media are a site of intense political contest during times of war. Indeed, war reporting is sometimes difficult to separate from the war effort itself, as U.S. military planners see American news as one of the central battlegrounds, where public attitudes toward war are molded. This lecture explores enduring questions about the relationship between journalism and war, paying particular attention to news coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.  
BILL HOYNES / Professor of Sociology

The Economy:  How did we get to this place, and can we get out?  
This talk aims to answer some questions about the future of the United States and the New York Region. Among the topics covered will be: whether or not this is a cyclical problem, or a symptom of long run decline; if the government can make policy when it has few policy instruments available; and whether globalization will prove to be a benefit to Americans.  
This course will also be offered during Period II.  
DAVID KENNETT / Elizabeth Stillman Williams Professor of Economics

Medieval Manuscripts at Vassar  
An exploration of late medieval manuscripts in Special Collections in the Vassar Library, originating in Europe, and dating from the 12th-15th centuries. We will look closely at the physical features of these materials, in order to discover how they were used by medieval readers.  
This course will also be offered during Period II.  
RON PATKUS / Head of Special Collections and Adjunct Associate Professor of History
African Renaissance or another False Dawn?: Civil Wars, State Reconfiguration and Democratization in Post-Colonial West Africa
Using Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast as case studies, this lecture explores the positive political and social transformations that are taking place in West Africa after two decades of violent conflict, economic recession and social turmoil. Though the outcomes of these transformations are still uncertain, more democratic regimes, active citizenry, and responsive economies are emerging in region. The sustainability of these changes, in light of the region's negative colonial legacies and current globalizing trends, will also be discussed
ISMAIL RASHID / Associate Professor of History

Writing Apartheid:
The Race, Sex, and Gender of Urban American Literature (Hubert Selby Jr.)
Based on his work on representations of the ghetto in Twentieth Century American Literature, Professor Simpson explores how the government document known as the "Moynihan Report" set the template for how we understand cities and the people that live in them and how several American literary artists have responded to this understanding.
TYRONE SIMPSON / Associate Professor of English

African American Parading in New Orleans:
Democracy Despite Government
This talk explores political meanings of African American parading in New Orleans. With photos and video footage we look at a long tradition of African American parading in the city before and after Katrina. The parades lay claim to streets for pleasure, articulations of community, modes of remembrance, and protest. Through the parades African Americans craft a distinctive, relatively egalitarian public space that we call democracy despite government.
ADELAIDE VILLMOARE / Professor of Political Science
PETER STILLMAN / Professor of Political Science

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Teenage Brain
This lecture is also offered during Period II.
ABIGAIL BAIRD / Assistant Professor of Psychology

How Technology Evolves:
The (Social) Construction of the Bicycle
JAMES CHALLEY/ Senior Lecturer of Science, Technology and Society
Light and Sound:
How ultrafast lasers let us ‘hear’ 29 octaves above middle-C, and why we might want to ‘listen’
BRIAN DALY / Assistant Professor of Physics

Microbial Wars:
Clashes Between the Human and Microbial World
DAVID ESTEBAN / Assistant Professor of Biology

The Culture and Chemistry of Cuisine
In the spring of 2011, Miriam Rossi, Professor of Chemistry, and David Jemiolo, Associate Professor of Biology, taught a course titled The Culture and Chemistry of Cuisine. The course was offered through the Science, Technology & Society multidisciplinary program and cross-listed in the chemistry curriculum as an introductory course that explored a variety of topics on food and food preparation. Weekly the course met twice, once for a lecture and discussion on some aspect of food preparation and a second "laboratory" devoted to cooking, field trips, or chemistry laboratory experiments on food.
DAVID JEMIOLO / Associate Professor of Biology

Evolving Robots:
Mechanical Animals Play the Game of Life
JOHN LONG / Professor of Biology and Chair of Biology

Long division and the secrets of infinity
JOHN McCLEARY / Professor of Mathematics on the Elizabeth Stillman Williams Chair and Chair of Mathematics

A Chemist & Glassblower’s Tour of the Stained Glass Windows in the Vassar College Chapel
CHRIS SMART / Associate Professor of Chemistry

A Tour of the Subatomic Zoo
A conversation about the latest ideas about what the world is really made of on the most fundamental level - quarks, photons and the Higgs Boson. See how discoveries in particle physics over the last century have led to practical things in the medical field and what we are hoping to see come out of the experiments at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN.
CINDY SCHWARTZ / Professor of Physics
LECTURES

ARTS

Rembrandt's Disreputable Dogs
Witty canine motifs in Rembrandt's prints and painting reveal how seventeenth-century artists as well as scientists were exploring the relationship between people and animals in the Age of Observation.

SUSAN KURETSKY / Sarah G. Blanding Professor of Art

Daily Practice, Musical Accomplishment, and the Music Collection of Jane Austen and Her Family
Few people realize that beloved novelist Jane Austen was also a musician, who took her daily piano practice seriously and collected music, much of which she copied out by hand. The surviving music collection of Jane Austen and other women in her family tells us a great deal about musical taste of the period, and sheds special light on the musical characters and scenes in her novels.

KATHRYN LIBIN / Associate Professor of Music and Chair of Music

Women, Palaces, and Main Building: Digging French Architecture at Vassar
Books on early modern architectural history in France seem predicated on the idea that only men built castles and palaces. The fact is, however, that certain women did, too, as they often enjoyed positions that allowed them to use architecture to project images of personal and political power. Intriguingly, one of these palaces would last long enough to influence the man who built, three hundred years later and in another continent, the first college for women in the United States. This presentation shows how the superb but now defunct Palace of the Tuileries, commissioned by Catherine de Médicis, remains alive today in some of the structures, roofs, and visual ornaments at Vassar College.

SOPHIE MARINEZ / Visiting Assistant Professor of French and Francophone Studies
A brief history of the English language: words and their meanings
This lecture will focus on the history and structure of the English language from its beginnings to the present day. As a way of illustrating and understanding some of the very many changes the language has undergone from the early middle ages to today, we will explore the English word-stock, a rich and diverse body of words from a number of (often surprising) sources and we will consider the ways in which the meaning of many words has shifted over time.
MARK AMODIO / Professor of English

Ending Deadly Conflict
This lecture uses historical case studies to identify practical ways to end conflict and build sustainable peace. It is concerned with the vulnerability of weak, failed and collapsed states, with post conflict periods that have returned to violence, and the problems of mediating conflicts that are unusually resistant to resolution.
BOB BRIGHAM / Professor of History on the Shirley Ecker Boskey Chair of International Relations

Vassar and the Roosevelts: Friends and Neighbors
(In conjunction with a viewing of the exhibition in Thompson Library.)
GLEN JOHNSON / Professor Emeritus Political Science

The Role of Academics in NGO projects in the Developing World: A Case Study: Providing Education and Health Care for Women and Girls in Rural Rajasthan
SHIRLEY JOHNSON-LANS / Professor of Economics and Chair of Economics

The Economy: How did we get to this place, and can we get out?
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DAVID KENNETT/ Elizabeth Stillman Williams Professor of Economics

Vassar and the Liberal Arts: Then and Now
RACHEL KITZINGER / Professor of Classics on the Matthew Vassar, Jr. Chair and Dean of Planning and Academic Affairs

Democracy in America: the sources of our discontent
MICHAEL McCARTHY / Professor Emeritus of Philosophy

Reflections on the Life and Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop
(In conjunction with a viewing of the Bishop exhibition in Thompson Library)
BARBARA PAGE / Professor Emeritus of English
Medieval Manuscripts at Vassar
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This lecture is also offered during Period I.
RON PATKUS / Head of Special Collections and Adjunct Associate Professor of History

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Teenage Brain
This lecture is also offered during Period I.
ABIGAIL BAIRD / Associate Professor of Psychology

Geographic Perspectives on the Hudson River School of Art, the American Landscape, and the Construction of National Identity
Images of specific landscapes and places can be powerful symbols in the construction of national identity. This lecture will present many of the artists and their images of Hudson Valley natural and cultural landscapes that formed a national imagination as the "Landscape That Defined America.
HARVEY FLAD / Emeritus Professor of Geography

Internet Privacy and Security: What to do, and what never to do.
Like most people, you are probably sharing and accessing more electronic information, in more ways, and from more places than ever before. How can you be sure that the data you are accessing is secure, and that your private information really is private? This session will help you learn what things you should do, and what things you should never do, to safeguard your data and how to tell when your information may be at risk. Topics will include email phishing attempts, online banking, using public WiFi hotspots, using public computers (such as in a hotel) and social networking sites such as Facebook.
BRET INGERMAN / Vice President for Computing and Information Services

Brain, Ritual, and Belief:
Toward a Cognitive Science of Religion
KEN LIVINGSTON / Professor of Psychology

Pascal's phenomenal triangle
In this talk, we will investigate some properties of Pascal's triangle - a triangular array of integers called binomial coefficients - with the goal of proving the binomial theorem and deriving some remarkable patterns and properties of this phenomenal creation.
BENJAMIN LOTTO / Professor of Mathematics and Dean of Freshmen
Big things come in small packages:
Lessons learned from coral reefs
Coral reefs are one of the most spectacular living systems on our planet, filled with a dizzying array of species that make coral reefs the "rain forests" of the ocean as well as the only living structure visible from space. In a world facing rapid climate change, the planet's coral reefs are fading away. The demise of the reefs comes at a sharp cost, but what we have learned about corals reveals fundamental properties of all life on earth, including human life. By understanding corals at a tiny scale, we come to understand the incredible power that small relationships have to transform life at the big scale.

JODI SCHWARZ / Assistant Professor of Biology

Organic Chemistry:
The Best Course You Never Took
CHRIS SMART / Associate Professor of Chemistry

Insights into the Evolution of the Human Brain
This class will explore the evolution of the human brain and how our nervous system allows us to experience our world, create language and develop culture. We will examine the recent research in genomics and neuroscience that is providing startling insights into the evolution of our most unique feature, our brain.

KATE SUSMAN / Professor of Biology on the Jacob P. Giraud, Jr. Chair

Elemental Analysis of Art and Antiquities
(and a Little Bit of the History of Chemistry at Vassar)
In 1865 when Vassar was ready to receive its first students, laboratories for teaching chemistry were up and running, exemplifying Vassar's commitment to teaching science as a vital component of a liberal arts education. However at that time, the structure of the atoms that make up all matter was not yet known. This lecture will discuss the discovery of atomic structure, some of the history of the chemistry department and chemistry buildings at Vassar, and how we use the modern technique of X-ray fluorescence for elemental analysis of art and antiquities.

JOSEPH TANSKI / Associate Professor of Chemistry and Chair, Chemistry Department