THINKING MATTERS
EXPANDING AND TRANSFORMING THE WAYS YOU THINK
Liberal Education at Stanford in the Freshman Year

Stanford University
Class of 2016
“Find the questions that captivate you, and I promise that you will discover your path to a creative and fulfilling education. Each of the Thinking Matters courses here asks important and enduring questions and will show you how such questions are tackled at a university. I urge you to embrace these and other exciting opportunities in your freshman year to explore, to get inspired, and to create your own vision for the next four years and beyond.”

—Harry Elam, Freeman-Thornton Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Olive H. Palmer Professor in the Humanities
Contents

Overview: Expanding and Transforming the Ways You Think ......................................................... 4

Structured Liberal Education (SLE) .............................................................................................. 7

Autumn Quarter Thinking Matters Courses .................................................................................. 9–23
The Art of Living .......................................................................................................................... 10
Breaking Codes, Finding Patterns ............................................................................................... 11
Can the People Rule? .................................................................................................................... 12
Constituting Justice ........................................................................................................................ 13
Education as Self-Fashioning: ...................................................................................................... 14–17
The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life ......................................................................................... 15
Building a Philosophical Way of Life ......................................................................................... 15
In Pursuit of Knowledge, Justice, and Truth ............................................................................... 16
Learning for a Public Life ............................................................................................................ 16
Rigorous and Precise Thinking .................................................................................................... 17
Everyday Life: How History Happens .......................................................................................... 18
Journeys ....................................................................................................................................... 19
The Science of Mythbusters ........................................................................................................ 20
Sustainability and Collapse ......................................................................................................... 21
Technological Visions of Utopia .................................................................................................. 22
Voyages and Visionaries .............................................................................................................. 23

Winter Quarter Thinking Matters Courses .................................................................................. 25–37
Bioethical Challenges of New Technology ................................................................................... 26
Century of Violence ...................................................................................................................... 27
Epic Journeys ............................................................................................................................... 28
From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe ......................................................................... 29
How Does Your Brain Work? ....................................................................................................... 30
Is the Universe Just? Explorations in the Classics ..................................................................... 31
The Poet Re-making the World .................................................................................................... 32
Rebellious Daughters, Filial Sons of the Chinese Family ............................................................. 33
Rules of War .................................................................................................................................. 34
Ultimate Meanings ...................................................................................................................... 35
Why Do We Like (to Read about) Vampires? .............................................................................. 36
World Archaeology and Global Heritage .................................................................................... 37

Spring Quarter Thinking Matters Courses .................................................................................. 39–50
The Cancer Problem: Causes, Treatments, and Prevention ...................................................... 40
Evil ................................................................................................................................................ 41
Evolution on Earth ....................................................................................................................... 42
How Do You Build a Nation? Inclusion and Exclusion in the Making of Modern Iran .......... 43
Human Rights and Humanitarianism ............................................................................................. 44
Media and Message ..................................................................................................................... 45
Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital ............................................................................. 46
Race Matters .................................................................................................................................. 47
Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity Since the Civil War .............................. 48
Subversive Acts ............................................................................................................................. 49
The Water Course .......................................................................................................................... 50

Frequently Asked Questions ...................................................................................................... 51

Indices ......................................................................................................................................... 52–54
By Course .................................................................................................................................... 52
By Department ............................................................................................................................... 53
By Faculty .................................................................................................................................... 54

ANY QUESTIONS?
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HOW TO USE THIS COURSE CATALOG

• Read the descriptions of the Thinking Matters and SLE courses.

• Rank your preferences for SLE and Thinking Matters courses by filling out Form 4, online at http://undergrad.stanford.edu.

• Make sure you have submitted this form, as well as the remainder of your reply forms, online, by 5:00 pm, Tuesday, June 5.

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Overview: 
Expanding and Transforming the Ways You Think

Building a Solid Foundation
You have embarked upon undergraduate study at Stanford, a research university where we give high priority to liberal education. Practically speaking, this means that you are expected to explore fully your potential academic interests and to develop the qualities of mind necessary for success in whatever specialized studies you might undertake. A liberal education also enables you to make connections across fields of study that will inform your future intellectual work and plans after Stanford.

In the first year, therefore, we expect you to build your own solid foundation. One way is by taking at least one course each quarter especially designed for freshmen — such as Thinking Matters, Freshman Seminars, and PWR1 — to accomplish these dual goals of exploration and development. You should craft a combination of required and elective courses into a freshman-year plan that reflects your individual needs and aspirations and also lays the groundwork for your future academic achievements.

Why Thinking Matters?
For more than 80 years Stanford has introduced incoming classes to the intellectual life of the university through required courses suited to their distinctive character and needs. Thinking Matters courses foreground significant and enduring questions and approach them from multiple perspectives. In high school, you spent a great deal of time providing answers to questions with a ‘right answer’ like those on the SAT exams. In Thinking Matters, our main goal is to help you develop the ability to ask rigorous and genuine questions that can lead to scientific experimentation or literary interpretation or social policy analysis. Thinking Matters will also help you discover, in a lively lecture and seminar format, collaborative ways to approach solving problems and understanding issues.

Thinking Matters courses are meant to develop your ability to ask questions and articulate problems in ways that are as unique as each of you. You will find yourself asking questions that you may never have thought to ask or in ways that you had never asked them before. The forms of inquiry and objects of study in Thinking Matters are diverse, from interpreting epic poetry to studying the politics of archaeological heritage to recognizing patterns and codes, but they are all concerned with the “how” as much as the “what” of knowledge.

Structure of Thinking Matters
1. Lectures are taught by faculty from a range of humanities, science, engineering, and social science fields as well as the Schools of Law and Medicine.
2. Small discussion sections are led by instructors holding doctorates who have been chosen in a highly competitive national search.
3. Personalized attention to student learning is a hallmark of Thinking Matters courses. Such individualized instruction will help each student develop the qualities of mind and critical and analytic skills necessary for university-level learning.
Choosing your Thinking Matters Courses

A foundational principle of Thinking Matters courses is that there are multiple perspectives on any question, and we encourage you to take a similar approach in listing your course preferences. There are at least ten Thinking Matters courses offered each quarter, and you will be required to take one to fulfill your freshman requirement. On Form 4, we ask you to rank six courses per quarter, including Structured Liberal Education (SLE) or Education as Self-Fashioning (ESF), both of which also satisfy the Thinking Matters requirement (see details below). We will reserve one space for you in one of your top choices. More than 95% of students receive their first or second choices.

The Thinking Matters curriculum is flexible. Courses serve both as a means to satisfy the one-course Thinking Matters requirement and as a way to explore your interests through electives. This catalog provides descriptions for all the Thinking Matters courses, and you should use it both to guide your ranking of six course preferences per quarter that you will enter on Form 4 of Approaching Stanford and to identify possible electives you might also take during the freshman year.

Below are some general guidelines to help you be intentional in your course selection.

1. For each section of the catalog, organized by quarters, there is a list of all the courses offered that quarter. You will need to rank six courses for every quarter.
2. Read through all of the course descriptions. Pay attention to the major questions asked by each course, the kinds of topics and materials that will be covered, and the kind of work you will be asked to do. Please refer to the Index to identify specific fields of interest.
3. Challenge yourself! In narrowing your choices, ask yourself: “Am I drawn to studying what is already familiar or what is unknown to me?” “How will I be examining my assumptions about living my life and understanding the world?” “Why is this topic important to me?”
4. Share your proposed list of courses with others and ask for their thoughts.

5. Don’t worry. You will have the opportunity to request to change the Thinking Matters course in which you have a reserved space to accommodate your schedule or your changing interests.

Flexibility, Choice, and Practice

Learning to make good academic planning decisions takes practice, lots of practice. Choosing among more than 35 Thinking Matters options is the first of what will certainly be many decision challenges about courses to take during your Stanford career. For most of you, a prescribed high school curriculum gave you little opportunity to develop these skills. We encourage you to use the Thinking Matters course ranking process for Approaching Stanford to pay attention to how you make choices: Do you follow your gut reaction? Do you conduct background research and apply a rational approach? Do you develop your preferences in conversations with others or alone?

Although you will rank your initial Thinking Matters preferences by the June 5 deadline for the Approaching Stanford forms, after August 13 you will be able to discuss your interests with your UAR Academic Director or Academic Advisor for Student-Athletes. Once you are on campus for New Student Orientation (NSO) and throughout your freshman year you will engage in these conversations about developing a meaningful academic plan with your Pre-Major Advisor and UAR advisors.
Options for Thinking Matters as a Requirement

Among the decisions you must make before completing Form 4 is whether to select a stand-alone Thinking Matters course or a course — or set of courses — that integrates the Thinking Matters requirement with the Writing and Rhetoric Requirement and/or other GER requirements.

Individual Thinking Matters Courses

We will use your ranked preferences to reserve space in one of your favorite (i.e. top two) Thinking Matters courses in either Autumn or Winter or Spring. In other words, we want to ensure that you will fulfill the one-course Thinking Matters requirement with one of your highest-ranked choices. Please note that we expect most students to go beyond the requirement and take additional Thinking Matters courses as an elective component of a strong foundation in the freshman year.

Integrated Courses:
Structured Liberal Education and Education as Self-Fashioning

For decades Structured Liberal Education (SLE) has offered the experience of a small liberal arts college to about 100 freshmen each year who live in the residence where the classes meet. Faculty from across the university give SLE lectures in the dorm and often join students for dinner afterward. SLE integrates the study of humanities classics and writing instruction and satisfies both the Thinking Matters requirement and the Writing and Rhetoric Requirements (PWR1 and PWR2) along with selected GER requirements. This comprehensive approach to liberal education is a three-quarter course sequence so you must rank it as #1 on the autumn and Winter and Spring course lists on Form 4 if you want to be considered for this option.

A new program offered only in Autumn quarter also satisfies both the Thinking Matters and the PWR1 requirement. Education as Self-Fashioning (ESF) is an experimental set of linked seminars related to the general theme expressed in the course title. Five seminars each with a different focus meet separately as small classes led by the faculty; all ESF students also come together for a plenum session or large lecture each week. Each seminar coordinates writing instruction with the course theme in specially designated writing sections. Be sure to rank one or more of the ESF seminars as #1 in Autumn quarter on Form 4 if you want to secure a reserved place.

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Why is the word network used to understand computers, ants, and people?

When, if ever, is war justified?

Who owns the past?

What is the relationship of law and justice?
Structured Liberal Education (SLE)

Structured Liberal Education (SLE) is a challenging and supportive year-long program that offers entering students a coherent path through the freshman experience. The small student population, the residential setting, and the renown of the faculty have, for nearly 40 years, combined to make SLE the college experience within the university.

Residence-based Learning

SLE freshmen live and learn together in the three houses (one freshman and two 4-class) within East Florence Moore Hall, where they are mixed with about an equal number of non-SLE freshmen and upperclass students. All the SLE lectures, small-group discussions, salons, films, and plays take place in the residence's lounges and classrooms. The physical concentration of SLE activities fosters close relationships among students as well as between students and instructors. Freshmen in SLE develop friendships that sustain them throughout their college years as well as an attachment to the SLE program that keeps them coming back as sophomores, juniors, and seniors to serve as writing tutors and mentors.

Intellectual Community

SLE draws students into a life of ideas in an atmosphere that emphasizes critical thinking and interpretation. In contrast to Thinking Matters courses, SLE's year-long chronological structure, extending from the ancient world to the present, offers students a broad and deep engagement with the ideas that have shaped our world. Shared readings promote vigorous exchange in the classroom setting, in the dining room at mealtime, and in the dorm late at night. Each week culminates either with a salon, in which a faculty member discusses with SLE students the resonances in our world of issues they have encountered in their readings or with a film chosen as a commentary on the written texts studied in lectures and discussion sections.

Distinguished visitors to campus often come to SLE for tea or pizza lunch with students. Recent visitors have been the President of Ireland Mary Robinson, Senator Russ Feingold, and writers Tim O’Brien, Sebastian Junger, and George Packer. Special events take SLE to San Francisco for the opera, museums, and theater. In addition, each quarter students organize and produce a play, which not only concludes the term with great fun for everyone but also offers an additional vantage point for viewing the period under study.

Preparation for the Undergraduate Career

More extensively than any other program for entering students, SLE develops critical reading, writing, and speaking skills that prepare students for excellence in their subsequent studies. Students receive individualized writing instruction all year long from SLE instructors and upper-class writing tutors. In seminars, students learn effective ways of contributing to discussions and of disagreeing with fellow discussants in a respectful and productive way. As a consequence, SLE students are remarkable for the intellectual energy they take to their later classes and are regularly over-represented among undergraduates winning academic honors and research grant funding at Stanford.

The SLE workload is approximately equal to two Stanford humanities courses each quarter, so it constitutes a significant portion of a student's academic load (students enroll in SLE for the entire year). Students take two to three additional courses each quarter, so they have no difficulty combining this coherent program of liberal education and skills development with courses in any sector of the university. SLE students go on to major in all the academic disciplines, from engineering to social sciences to humanities, so some are doing SLE with calculus and chemistry while others are doing SLE with introductory economics, foreign language, and history.

Students envisioning a science or engineering major will gain in SLE a broad and coherent view of literature, philosophy, and the arts that they otherwise would be required, by the university's graduation requirements, to pick up in unrelated courses that might leave large gaps in their understanding.

Students envisioning a major in humanities or social sciences will gain an incomparable foundation for more advanced study. Because the thrice-weekly lectures are given by faculty members drawn from the various humanities and arts departments, students end the year having become acquainted with some 70 professors, which is an invaluable aid to selecting follow-up classes and even to choosing one's major.

Because SLE stretches across three quarters and involves the workload of a double-course each quarter, it satisfies numerous requirements that all Stanford students must satisfy in order to graduate.
As a consequence, students who enroll in SLE not only receive optimal instruction in classic works of philosophy and literature but also gain greater choice and flexibility in the sophomore, junior, and senior years because they have satisfied so many of the university’s requirements in the first year. In 2012-13, SLE will satisfy all freshman-year requirements (Writing I, Thinking Matters), Writing II (which students otherwise postpone until the sophomore year), and several general education requirements.

Is SLE right for you?
Check out the video testimonials by SLE students, examples of stunning student submissions to SLE Challenges and prize-winning papers, recent syllabi and book lists, and pictures of SLE events on the program’s website (http://sle.stanford.edu).

INTERDISCIPLINARY
3 hours of lecture weekly
4 hours of small-group discussion weekly
Regular meetings with writing tutors
Weekly film series and salons

CLASS SCHEDULE:
SLE does not meet on Mondays or Fridays.

Lectures:
Tuesday at 3:30 and 6:00, and Wednesday at 6:00.

Discussion sections:
Wednesday and Thursday, 3:15-5:00.

SLE Salon or film screening:
Thursday at 6:00pm.

REPRESENTATIVE READINGS AND AUTHORs

**Autumn**
Homer
Plato
Aristotle
Greek tragedy
Hebrew Bible
Zhuangzi
Mengzi
Virgil
New Testament

**Winter**
Augustine
Aquinas
Dante
Chrétiens de Troyes
Don Quixote
Machiavelli
Descartes
Equiano
Diderot
Rousseau

**Spring**
Shelley
Balzac
Marx
Nietzsche
Freud
Eliot
Woolf
Kafka
Brecht
Beauvoir
Sartre
Autumn Quarter *Thinking Matters* Courses

The Art of Living
Breaking Codes, Finding Patterns
Can the People Rule?
Constituting Justice
Education as Self-Fashioning:
   - The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life
   - Building a Philosophical Way of Life
   - In Pursuit of Knowledge, Justice, and Truth
   - Learning for a Public Life
   - Rigorous and Precise Thinking
Everyday Life: How History Happens
Journeys
The Science of *Mythbusters*
Sustainability and Collapse
Technological Visions of Utopia
Voyages and Visionaries
Our lives are not simply given to us, but also something we make: as we examine the circumstances of our existence, recognizing certain facts as immutable and others as subject to our control, each of us faces the challenge of fashioning out of them a way of living that is both meaningful and justifiable. *The Art of Living* will explore different ways to think about the nature of that challenge — how to accommodate conflicting demands and values, how to make our choices “artfully,” how we might use works of imaginative literature to inspire us. We will read important works of literature and philosophy, each of which implies a different value by which to live, whether reason, authenticity, community, art, or faith. In each case, you will be presented with different perspectives and asked to work out for yourself what you find most persuasive, thereby fine-tuning skills essential to your own lifelong project of self-construction.

**R. Lanier Anderson (Philosophy)**
Professor Anderson specializes in modern European philosophy, and is one half of Stanford’s Philosophy and Literature initiative.

**Joshua Landy (French and Italian)**
Professor Landy, the other half of the Philosophy and Literature initiative, works on the function of fiction.

**Kenneth Taylor (Philosophy)**
Professor Taylor writes about mind, language, and value, and can be heard every week on the public radio show “Philosophy Talk.”

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**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Plato, *Symposium*

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

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*Odilon Redon, *Ophelia*, 1902.*
Why are humans drawn to making and breaking codes? To what extent is finding patterns both an art and a science?

Cryptography has been used for millennia for secure communications, and its counterpart, cryptanalysis, or code breaking, has been around for just slightly less time. In this course we will explore the history of cryptography and cryptanalysis including the Enigma code, Navajo windtalkers, early computer science and the invention of modern Bayesian inference. We will try our own hand at breaking codes using some basic statistical tools for which no prior experience is necessary. Finally, we will consider the topic of patterns more generally, raising such questions as why we impute meaning to patterns, such as Biblical codes, and why we assume a complexity within a pattern when it’s not there, such as the coincidence of birthdays in a group.

Susan Holmes (Statistics)
Professor Holmes’ main areas of interest are computer intensive methods in data mining and multivariate statistics, especially the bootstrap.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Simon Singh,
The Code Book

Scarlett Thomas,
PopCo

Paul Lunde,
The Book of Codes

David Kahn,
The Codebreakers

A Beautiful Mind (film)
Can the People Rule?

In this course, we will explore the idea of democracy through the experience of the American republic, focusing on the constitutional experiments of the Revolutionary era and the 19th-century democracy analyzed by Alexis de Tocqueville. We then address contemporary criticisms voiced against many democracies today: that the public is not well informed and therefore incapable of governing. You will read and learn to draw on major works of political theory to think critically about the complexities of American democracy. You will also be asked to participate in a two-week experiment in Deliberative Polling, which involves gathering citizens in random groups to study and discuss issues. Through this exercise, you will explore whether this structure might offer an attractive or complementary alternative to representative rule.

Jack Rakove (History and Political Science)

James Fishkin (Communication)
Professor Fishkin is the author of *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*, and also conducts Deliberative Polling around the world.

**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison,
*The Federalist*

Alexis de Tocqueville,
*Democracy in America*

Robert Dahl,
*How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*

James Fishkin
*The Voice of the People*

Magic Town (film)

PBS special on *Deliberative Polling*

How did our ideas about democracy as a universal norm evolve from a term once used to describe a handful of ancient Greek city-states? Would American democracy function better if we applied ancient practices that allowed the people to rule more directly and knowledgeably?

“It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”

— Alexander Hamilton,
*The Federalist*
Constituting Justice

How does justice incorporate the ideals of freedom, equality, and security? How are these ideals balanced against each other? How are they made concrete in the U.S. Constitution and law?

In this course we consider three core ideals that animate the idea of justice: freedom, equality, and security. We explore the relationship between these different concepts through an interdisciplinary inquiry that includes political philosophy, history, and law. In your reading, writing, and thinking, you will move between the realm of abstract ideas and actual legal cases. We begin with the philosophical roots of the ideals of freedom, equality, and security, and then focus on their articulation in the U.S. Constitution and the overarching U.S. legal framework. Students will learn to analyze the distinctive challenges posed to the ideals of freedom, equality, and security by 21st century developments such as the emergence of the internet and the rise of non-state warfare.

Pamela Karlan (School of Law)
Professor Karlan teaches Public Interest Law and is Co-Director of the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic at Stanford Law School. She specializes in constitutional law and litigation regarding civil rights and civil liberties issues, and is a two-time winner of the Law School’s John Bingham Hurlbut Award for teaching.

Rob Reich (Political Science)
Professor Reich currently directs the Program on Ethics in Society and the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. He was awarded the Walter J. Gores Award, Stanford’s highest honor for teaching, and delivered the Class Day Lecture at the 2011 Stanford Commencement.

Jim Steyer (CSRE)
Dr. Steyer has spent more than 20 years as one of the most respected experts and entrepreneurs on issues related to children’s policy and media in the United States. As CEO, he is responsible for the overall leadership of Common Sense Media, the nation’s leading nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the media lives of kids and families.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Hobbes, Leviathan

John Stuart Mill,
On Liberty

Supreme Court decisions involving the civil rights and civil liberties of young people
Education as Self-Fashioning

“What is the meaning and purpose of a liberal education? 

Education as Self-Fashioning is a unique opportunity offered only in the Autumn quarter, since its aim is to introduce entering students to a liberal education. The courses provide you with an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member in a seminar-style setting while simultaneously completing your first-year writing requirement. In Education as Self-Fashioning, we consider writings about education by intellectuals working in various fields, with the aim of articulating different ways that education can be used to structure one’s thinking, one’s self, and ultimately one’s life as a whole. You will grapple with this issue in dialogue with fellow students and faculty from across a wide range of disciplines — from the humanities and social sciences through the natural sciences and mathematics.

COMPONENTS OF ESF

ESF counts as a 7-unit course.

1. A seminar with a faculty member that meets once per week for at least 75 minutes

Participating students will enroll in one of these, taught by a faculty member from the featured discipline (or disciplines, in the case of team taught seminars).

2. A section to meet with a designated writing instructor to meet twice per week for 110 minutes

The discipline of writing plays a central role in liberal education in general, but also in the specific process of self-fashioning. Through rendering our thoughts explicit and articulated, we give our minds more definite shape, and at the same time make our thoughts available for self-examination and self-criticism. Because of these important connections, all ESF courses are writing intensive.

3. A lecture series that will meet once-a-week featuring prominent intellectuals

ESF will sponsor a lecture series featuring prominent intellectuals (from Stanford or elsewhere) lecturing on the nature and meaning of liberal education. These lectures are required for students enrolled in ESF, but they will also be open to the public. The lectures will constitute an ongoing, campus-wide conversation about the aims of liberal education.

“Let [the student] be asked for an account not merely of the words of his lesson, but of its sense and substance, and judge the profit he has made by the testimony not of his memory, but of his life.”

— Montaigne
ESF Seminars

The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life

Moving through history from the Rome of the Emperor Hadrian, to the city-states of Renaissance Italy, to the 18th century republic of the United States, we will examine how self-made men fashioned themselves and their surroundings by educating themselves broadly. We will ask how a liberal education made their active careers richer and more transformational. We will also take up the great debate on whether a liberal education or vocational training is the surest path to advancement. We will engage this debate through the works of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington but consider today’s struggle over the same issues — a struggle that engrosses both highly industrialized and developing societies.

Blair Hoxby (English)
Professor Blair Hoxby studies the literature and arts of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, with a special interest in the persistent influence of classical civilization.

Caroline Hoxby (Economics)
Professor Caroline Hoxby evaluates the effects of educational policies and analyzes the economic principles underlying our primary, secondary, and university school systems.

Building a Philosophical Way of Life

From the beginning, philosophers have been interested in education, since both philosophy and education are fundamentally concerned with the development of a person’s character and how that prepares her to lead a good life. We will explore a range of philosophical approaches to education and its effects on the project of constructing a self one can call one’s own. Central issues will include the proper role of reason in life, what “self-fashioning” even is, what makes true self-governance possible, whether education can liberate the individual or a group of people, and how we should conceive a philosophical education in an era of increasing professionalization and specialization.

R. Lanier Anderson (Philosophy)
Professor Anderson works on the history of philosophy, and has special interests in Nietzsche, Kant, Montaigne, and existentialism. Among the questions he investigates is the nature of the self, and whether it is something given to us, or instead something we must make for ourselves (perhaps by means of a liberal education).

Selected texts from:

- Marcus Aurelius
- Baldassare Castiglione
- Michel de Montaigne
- John Milton
- Thomas Jefferson
- W.E.B. Du Bois

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Selected texts from:

- Michel de Montaigne, “Of education”; “To flee from sensual pleasure at the price of life”; “Of giving the lie”; “Of repentance”
- Emmanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”; The Conflict of the Faculties
- Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science (selections)
- W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk
- Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (selections)
- Louis Menand, The Marketplace of Ideas
In what sense does education, the acquisition of knowledge, and reflection make one a better person? This question was at the core of the beginning of European moral philosophy when Socrates is said to have asserted that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” The Socratic dialogues of Plato explore the link between knowledge and a just character. Yet for many of Socrates’ Athenian contemporaries the newly emerging education in 5th c. Athens was subversive and impious. The trial, conviction and execution of Socrates brought into focus profound and enduring questions about the relation of liberal education to traditional authority, especially religious belief. Then 800 years later another intellectual giant of antiquity, St. Augustine, argued that systematic rational thought could never be enough to discover ultimate truths, that faith was essential.

Richard Saller (Classics)
Professor Saller studies ancient Greek and Roman history, and is Dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences.

Selected texts from:
Plato
Aristophanes
Aristotle
St. Augustine

Learning for a Public Life

Can an education impart more than bookish learning? This is the question that critics have posed since the European Renaissance. Through their reflections, these critics posited an alternative ideal of education that prepared the student for life outside the academy. Over the centuries, this ideal would evolve into what we would today call an “intellectual” — but this modern concept only captures a part of what earlier writers thought learning could achieve. In this course, we will focus on how education can prepare students to engage in public debates, and the role that the university can play in public learning.

Dan Edelstein (French and Italian)
Professor Edelstein works on 18th-century intellectual networks and revolutions.

Selected texts from:
Michel de Montaigne
Rene Descartes
Jean Jacques Rousseau
Voltaire
Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Adam Gopnik
Rigorous and Precise Thinking

Certain types of learning bring a discipline to the mind that permanently changes the way one thinks. Precise formal reasoning is one example. In this course, we focus on the nature of mathematical invention and learning. What is a formal proof? Why are proofs necessary? How does one construct a proof? How does one invent; how does one find ideas? Participants should be willing to write about the creative mathematical process, and also to (learn to) write formal proofs.

Ravi Vakil (Mathematics)
Professor Vakil has won a number of research awards, and also has a long history working with bright students before college; for example he cofounded and is faculty director of the Stanford Math Circle. You can learn more at http://math.stanford.edu/~vakil.

Selected texts from:
- Plato
- Euclid
- G.H. Hardy
- Douglas Hofstadter
- Timothy Gowers
- Terence Tao
To what extent can individuals’ daily actions influence world events, and to what extent are individuals influenced by world events?

This course investigates the relationship between private lives and public affairs. We will trace how small acts contribute to global change and, in turn, how global change can shape one’s sense of self. We will explore the shifting mentalities of individuals during the most dramatic transformations in 20th century Europe — World War I, communist revolution, the rise of Nazism, World War II, the Holocaust, and the Cold War. Through analysis of memoirs, diaries, essays, novels, and state documents, you will examine how social and political developments can reveal the very boundaries between self and society. To make this exploration more personal, you will develop a fictional persona that you will keep throughout the quarter through which you explore the everyday workings behind momentous change.

Edith Sheffer (History)
Professor Sheffer specializes in 20th-century Germany and the Cold War.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Sigmund Freud,
*Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*

Joseph Conrad,
*Heart of Darkness*

Margaret Higonnet, ed.,
*Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of War*

Primo Levi,
*Survival in Auschwitz*

Slavenka Drakulic,
*How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*

*The Battle of Algiers* (film)
Journeys

Is death final or only the beginning of another journey? How do the mysteries of destination give rise to our most basic questions of purpose, meaning, and faith, and challenge us to consider our proper relation to others?

Journeys will examine works written across a span of some 2,300 years, from Chinese philosophy to American short stories. Each of these forms and genres presents some essential aspect of the journey we all share, and of the various passages we make within that one great journey that relentlessly challenge and transform us even as we advance toward what the poet Thomas Gray called our “inevitable hour.” By reading, discussing, and interpreting these works, we will ask you to consider how each text compels us, by the penetration of its vision and the power of its art, to make part of our own journey in its company.

Tobias Wolff (English)
Professor Wolff has authored the memoir This Boy’s Life and several other books of fiction and nonfiction.

Lee Yearley (Religious Studies)
Professor Yearley has written, among other works, a comparison between major Confucian and Christian thinkers that has recently been translated into Chinese. He is the Walter Y. Evans-Wentz Professor and has received the Bing Teaching Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

James Baldwin,
*The Fire Next Time*

Albert Camus,
*The Stranger*

Flannery O’Connor, selected stories

Isak Dinesen, selected stories

Leo Tolstoy, selected stories

Writings of Chuang Tzu, with selected poems from the T’ang Dynasty
As its point of departure, this course will examine and critique selected episodes of the television series, *MythBusters* (Discovery Channel), which tests the validity of many popular beliefs, including myths, rumors, traditions, and stories, in a variety of imaginative ways. We will take the opportunity to delve more deeply into the applicability of the scientific method in understanding a vast range of real-world problems, and into the practical acquisition of fact-based knowledge, which together form the cornerstone of all science. The intellectual framework of this course will be based, first and foremost, on skeptical inquiry, combined with the other key ingredients of good science, which include: careful experimental design, meticulous observation and measurement, quantitative analysis and modeling, the evaluation of statistical significance, recovery from failure, and the continuous cycle of hypothesis and testing. We hope to inculcate in our students “a taste for questioning, a sense of observation, intellectual rigor, practice with reasoning, modesty in the face of facts, the ability to distinguish between true and false, and an attachment to logical and precise language.” (Yves Quéré, 2010 Science 330: 605).

The faculty are distinguished by their exceptionally broad scientific backgrounds and diverse research interests: all three are associated with Bio-X, and collectively they hold appointments in Stanford departments and programs covering physics, biology, chemistry, biomedicine, and computer science.

**Steven M. Block (Applied Physics and Biology)**
Professor Block, the S.W. Ascherman Chair of Sciences, is a biophysicist with a passion for all science and a background in both physics and molecular biology; his lab group conducts research on single proteins and nucleic acids using advanced optical methods.

**Vijay Pande (Chemistry and, by courtesy, Computer Science and Structural Biology)**
Professor Pande is the chair of the Biophysics Program, in addition to being the Director of the Folding@Home distributed computing project. His background is in physics, and his research involves using computers and modeling to tackle challenging problems in chemical biology, biophysics, and biomedicine.

**Jan Skotheim (Biology and, by courtesy, Chemical and Systems Biology)**
Professor Skotheim is a cell and systems biologist who was originally trained as an applied mathematician. His research focuses on a variety of problems associated with the diversity of natural forms, including the principles of genetic control of the cell division cycle and size control in individual cells.

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**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Episodes of *MythBusters.*

Other material to be announced.
Sustainability and Collapse will explore what people in different places and periods of time have envisioned as successful ways of living with nature and how such ways of life have come under pressure. We will focus particularly on the interface between scientific and humanistic approaches to questions of environmental sustainability through a study of novels, historical texts, and works of biogeography. You will learn to ask how textual and visual images inform our ideas about what it means to live sustainably. We will then consider whether those ideas are in accordance with or in conflict with scientific understandings of human uses of nature. This course takes on some of the fundamental problems that presently confront our global community.

**Mark Zoback (Geophysics)**
Professor Zoback does research on earthquakes and active faulting, optimizing recovery of natural resources, and minimizing the environmental impact of resource development.

“We still argue about when the dodo actually became extinct, but it probably disappeared about the 1660s. . . . There were extinctions before and there’s been lots of extinctions since, but it was an important extinction because that was the first time, the first time in the whole of man’s history, that he realized he had caused the disappearance of a species. . . . And it was at that moment — or in that era — when he realized the dodo was gone, that he realized the world was an exhaustible place.”
From David Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo*

**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

John Steinbeck,
*The Grapes of Wrath*

Thomas Malthus,
*Essay on the Principle of Population*

Michiko Ishimure,
*Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow*

David Quammen,
*The Song of the Dodo*

Amitav Ghosh,
*The Hungry Tide*
Technological Visions of Utopia

How do science and technology shape the frameworks for imagining utopian or dystopian societies?

Sir Thomas More gave a name to the philosophical ideal of a “good society” — a word that is now a part of common language: utopia. In the almost 500 years since More’s *Utopia* appeared, changes in society — including enormous advances in science and technology — have opened up new possibilities for the utopian society that More and his predecessors could not have envisioned. At the same time science and technology also entail risks that suggest more dystopian scenarios — in their most extreme form, threats to humanity’s very survival. We will look at several works that consider how literary visions of society have evolved with the progress of science and technology. The readings begin with More and include examples of more technologically determined visions of the late 20th century, as imagined in works of fiction.

Rob Robinson (German Studies)
Professor Robinson claims to have the largest science fiction collection at Stanford.

Eric Roberts (Computer Science)
Professor Roberts has had a network address since 1970.

**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Thomas More,  
*Utopia*

George Orwell,  
*1984*

Aldous Huxley,  
*Brave New World*

Neal Stephenson,  
*Snow Crash*

Ursula LeGuin,  
*The Dispossessed*
Voyages and Visionaries

How did cross-cultural contact between Europe and Asia in the pre-modern era produce our modern concept of civilization?

In this course we examine five moments of intellectual encounter in the pre-modern era among civilizations of the eastern hemisphere, including India and China and what we now call the Middle East. Through the eyes of scholars, pilgrims, and missionaries, you will learn to map the itineraries of early travelers and to analyze their experiences from a comparative perspective. We will focus on reconstructing the worldviews and geographical imaginations that inform each text with reference to historical maps and images.

Grant Parker (Classics)
Professor Parker was born in South Africa. He writes about the exotic elements of Roman imperial culture.

Kären Wigen (History)
Professor Wigen studied Japanese literature and geography before becoming a historian. She teaches courses on Japan, maps, and world history.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Herodotus,
The Histories

Egeria,
Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Xuanzang,
Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World

Alberuni,
Alberuni’s India

Matteo Ricci,
China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci

South-East Asia from Ptolemy’s geography
Redrawn in the 15th century. The British Library Harley MS 7182.
How do you capture “thinking”? In 1902, Auguste Rodin showed it through his iconic bronze sculpture of a seated nude male figure deep in meditation. “The Thinker” has returned to the Cantor Art Center at Stanford just in time to greet the Class of 2016 and inaugurate the new Thinking Matters courses.
Winter Quarter *Thinking Matters* Courses

- Bioethical Challenges of New Technology
- Century of Violence
- Epic Journeys
- From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe
- How Does the Brain Work?
- Is the Universe Just? Explorations in the Classics
- Poet Re-making the World
- Rebellious Daughters and Filial Sons of the Chinese Family
- Rules of War
- Ultimate Meanings
- Why Do We Like (to Read About) Vampires?
- World Archaeology and Global Heritage
Bioethical Challenges of New Technology

How might we apply ideas from ethical theory to contemporary issues and debates in biotechnology?

This course will provide critical encounters with some of the central topics in the field of bioethics, with an emphasis on new technologies. Controversies over genetic engineering, stem cell research, reproductive technologies, and genetic testing will provide an opportunity for you to critically assess arguments and evidence. We will begin with an overview of the field and the theoretical approaches to bioethics that have been derived from philosophy. You will then have the opportunity to engage in debate and learn how to identify underlying values and how to apply ideas from ethical theory to contemporary problems.

David Magnus (School of Medicine)
Professor Magnus is Thomas A. Raffin Professor of Medicine and Biomedical Ethics and Professor (Teaching) of Pediatrics, and the Director of the Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics. He is the co-Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Bioethics and President of the Association of Bioethics Program Directors.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Bernard Rollin,

Arthur Caplan, Glenn McGee and David Magnus,
“What is immoral about eugenics?”

John Robertson,
“Genetic Selection of Offspring Characteristics”

Francois Baylis,
“Animal Eggs for Stem Cell Research: A path not worth taking”

Charles Murdoch and Christopher Scott,
“Stem Cell Tourism and the Power of Hope”

Paul Root Wolpe, Kenneth Foster, and Daniel Lengleben,
“Emerging Neurotechnologies for Lie-Detection: Promises and Perils”
This course explores the evolution, varieties, and logic of mass violence from the early 20th century to the present day. You will engage with and analyze primary accounts of such violence by victims, observers, perpetrators, and courts. We will then consider the effectiveness of various efforts to confront genocides and crimes against humanity in international courts and institutions, past and present. We start with the emergence of genocide as a modern, international issue; proceed with colonial massacres in early 20th century Africa; moved to the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire and WWI, Nazi and Nazi-inspired racial murder, communist-induced mass violence in the Soviet Union and Asia, ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia; and end with an examination of the recent genocides in Rwanda, Sudan, and the Middle East.

Amir Weiner (History)
Professor Weiner specializes in the history of totalitarian regimes, World War II, and the former Soviet Union.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Yuan Gao, 
Born Red

Eugenia Ginzburg, 
Journey into the Whirlwind

Daoud Hari, 
The Translator

Ernst Junger, 
Storm of Steel

Jean Hatzfeld, 
Machete Season

Primo Levi, 
Survival in Auschwitz
Epic Journeys

What makes an epic hero? How does the epic poem externalize our quest for identity and self-definition?

The human quest for identity and self-knowledge is the oldest story of human culture. It almost always involves a confrontation with death. As the epic hero journeys across the physical world and descends into the underworld to visit the dead and seek counsel from them, he gradually comes to understand himself in a deeper, more meaningful way than before he set out on his journey. In this course, you will learn to engage in depth with some of the great epics of the Western tradition, beginning with The Epic of Gilgamesh and ending with Dante’s masterpiece, The Divine Comedy. In each case, we will consider the unique goals of each hero’s journey and the obstacles he must confront in order to reach his destination, with particular attention to the themes of violence in self and society, exile and alienation, the encounter with ancestors, the female voice, and divine guidance. We will focus on how the hero’s search for a moral identity in relation to his community connects to current definitions of the ethical life in relation to political violence, war, honoring the dead, and confronting our mortality.

Robert Harrison (French and Italian)
Professor Harrison has written four books on a diverse array of topics, ranging from Italian lyric poetry to man and his relationship with the environment. He is the host of weekly radio talk show, Entitled Opinions (about Life and Literature), which airs on KZSU FM 90.1, Stanford’s radio station.

Laura Wittman (French and Italian)
Professor Wittman’s teaching and research examine the connections between literature and religious experience.

Three times
I started toward her, and my heart was urgent to hold her,
and three times she fluttered out of my hands like a shadow
or a dream.
— Homer, The Odyssey

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

The Epic of Gilgamesh
Homer,
Odyssey
Virgil,
Aeneid
Dante,
The Divine Comedy
From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe

This course examines the defining moments when western science, philosophy, and religion became disentangled from one another, eventually leading to the development of our modern secular culture. As background for understanding the Copernican revolution and its aftermath, we begin with a brief examination of Plato and Aristotle, and how these two Ancient Greek thinkers were later taken up in the medieval period, resulting in a synthesis in which science, philosophy, and religion were intimately interconnected.

How and why did the Copernican revolution in astronomy — which placed the Sun at the center of the solar system rather than the earth — have such a profound effect on the relationship between science, philosophy, and religion? How did it ultimately lead to the secularization of modern society?

Michael Friedman (Philosophy)
Professor Friedman works primarily in the history and philosophy of science in the modern period — concentrating on Kant and his relationship to Newton, the development of both science and philosophy since then, and the resulting prospects for a new reconciliation between science, philosophy, religion, and democracy in our own time.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL
Plato, Republic
Aristotle, Physics
Galileo, Discoveries and Opinions
Descartes, Philosophical Writings
Newton, Philosophical Writings
Leibniz and Clarke, Correspondence

The sky according to Copernicus
How Does Your Brain Work?

How do the biological and chemical processes in the brain give rise to the mind that lets us talk, walk, laugh, love, learn, remember, and forget? How does the brain, in other words, make us human?

The human brain is the most complex organ we know. It has evolved over time by adapting to the various behavioral and environmental constraints. The highly interactive lectures and discussions in this course will be directed at understanding the biological mechanisms of brain function, from the individual structures to functioning brains. You will learn to analyze how the science of the brain has emerged by critically reading and writing about experiments and other observations. In addition, you will learn to assess the accuracy of how brain science is reported in the press, the web, and in other forms of popular representation.

Russell D. Fernald (Biology and Human Biology)
Professor Fernald’s research focuses on how social behavior influences the brain.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

David Eagleman,
Incognito

Mat Ridley,
The Red Queen

Oliver Sachs,
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat
Is the Universe Just?
Explorations in the Classics

What can the Classics teach us about understanding justice and injustice?

Do you ask yourself whether your life is controlled more by your own free choices or by your genetic code? Do you worry whether a superpower can function without hubristic arrogance? Do you ponder what constitutes the Good Life? If these sorts of issues are central to your intellectual and personal growth, this course will demonstrate to you that the ancient Mediterranean world was equally consumed with questions about the nature of human society and human existence. We will explore certain recurring themes within classical text such as the relationship between power and gender; gods and humans; innocence and evil. We will read a wide and deep selection of important and influential literary texts from the Near East, Greece, and Rome, spanning from c.2000 BCE to the first century BCE. The readings will include creation texts, epic, lyric, tragedy, and philosophy.

Marsh McCall (Classics)
Professor McCall, ΦΒΚ Teacher of the Year in 2002, has taught generations of Stanford freshmen in courses such as the one described above, and looks forward to teaching another generation next Winter.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

- Genesis
- Homer, Odyssey
- Sappho, Selections
- Sophocles, Oedipus Rex
- Plato, Apology
- Vergil, Aeneid

Venus brings Aeneas his weapons (State 2) Wenzel Hollar (1607–1677).
Can poetry change the world?

Poets use form and language to hold up a mirror to the events that change the world and the making of a poem can also be the re-making of a world. We will read and study poetry from different historical, cultural, and poetic traditions, and explore whether something as individual as artistic expression can help us cope with the social and political events that bring suffering and destruction. The course follows the adventures of the individual poet: from a young man caught in the trenches of the First World War, to a Japanese haiku master of the 17th century, to an American Beat, to an English woman trapped in the conventions of her time, to a contemporary U.S. soldier in Iraq. Poets show us the many similarities, as well as rich cultural differences, between us all.

Eavan Boland (English)
Professor Boland’s research interests include women and poetry, Irish literature, and computer technology. Her most recent publications are *New Collected Poems* and *The Making of a Sonnet: A Norton Anthology*, which she co-edited with Edward Hirsch.

Steven Carter (East Asian Languages and Cultures)
Professor Carter is a specialist in Japanese poetry and poetics and a prominent translator.

**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

- Wilfred Owen, *Strange Meeting*
- Basho, *The Narrow Road of the Interior*
- Jack Kerouac, *Book of Haikus*
- WWII internment camp haikus
- Charlotte Mew, *An Introduction*
- T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
Rebellious Daughters and Filial Sons of the Chinese Family

How has the family been broken, preserved, and reinvented in the fast-changing world of revolution and modernization?

Rebellious Daughters and Filial Sons of the Chinese Family follows the theme of the Chinese family in fiction and film to investigate the core values that hold it together in the midst of great historical change. You will learn to interpret both fiction and film as visual and textual narratives that illuminate the multiple aspects of family and community. We will explore how modernization, colonialism, revolution, war, and immigration disrupt traditional home and family. Through film and text, we will discover the various poignant attempts to rebuild family relations in the midst of such dislocation. As you embark on your college education and take leave of your own families, you might start to consider how your familial ties shape your concept of self, your emotional attachment to community, social relationships with society, and political consciousness.

Ban Wang (East Asian Languages and Cultures, Comparative Literature)
Born and raised in China, Professor Wang received his PhD in Comparative and Asian Literature at UCLA.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Lu Xun, “My Old Home,” “New Year’s Sacrifice,” and “A Madman’s Diary”

Shen Congwen, “Three Men and One Woman,” “Hsiao-Hsiao”

Mao Dun, “Spring Silkworms”

Yu Hua, To Live

Zhang Yimou, Road Home (film)

Ang Lee, Eat Drink Man Woman (film)

*Family In Lanzhou, China [1944 Fr. Mark Tennien [Restored]]*
*Author Ralph Repo*
Rules of War

When, if ever, is war justified? How are ethical norms translated into rules that govern armed conflict? Are these rules still relevant in light of the changing nature of warfare?

We will examine seminal readings on just war theory, investigate the legal rules that govern the resort to and conduct of war, and study whether these rules affect the conduct of states and individuals. We will examine alternative ethical frameworks, competing disciplinary approaches to war, and tensions between the outcomes suggested by ethical norms, on the one hand, and legal rules, on the other. Students will engage actively with these questions by participating in an interactive role-playing simulation, in which they will be assigned roles as government officials, advisors, or other actors who will confront ethical, legal, and strategic problems as they make decisions about military intervention and policies regarding the threat and use of force in an international crisis.

Scott D. Sagan (Political Science)
Professor Sagan served as a special assistant to the Director of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before coming to Stanford and is now the Caroline S.G. Munro Professor of Political Science and a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation and the Freeman Spogli Institute.

Allen S. Weiner (School of Law)
Professor Weiner served as an attorney in the U.S. State Department for over a decade before joining the Stanford faculty and is currently the Director of the Stanford Program in International and Comparative Law, and Co-director of the Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Michael Walzer,
Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations

Barack Obama,
“A Just and Lasting Peace,” Nobel Peace Prize Lecture

John Kelsay,
Arguing Just War in Islam

The UN Charter

The 1949 Geneva Convention
Ultimate Meanings

Does life have some ultimate meaning or purpose? How can the stories used by the world’s religions help us find the answer to this question?

Ultimate Meanings will focus on stories shared by the world’s three great monotheistic traditions: stories first recorded in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and later elaborated upon by Jews, Christians, Muslims, and secular readers. Our aim is to understand the original meaning of these stories — what their authors intended them to mean — as well as to examine how different kinds of readers, from religious scholars to artists to feminists, have interpreted and understood them. This course will help you further develop your skills as an interpreter, which includes not only the ability to find meaning in texts but also to appreciate the meanings that others find there.

Steven Weitzman (Religious Studies)
Professor Weitzman is a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies. The questions that fascinate him include how the Bible has shaped the history of imagination.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

The Bible
(selections from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament)

Mary Shelley,
Frankenstein

Margaret Atwood,
The Handmaid’s Tale

Michael Walzer,
Exodus and Revolution

Elie Wiesel,
The Trial of God

Films by Quentin Tarantino and Coen brothers

Frontispiece to Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
Published by Colburn and Bentley, London 1831
For the past two centuries, elite writers, composers, and artists have found inspiration in the stories, songs, and beliefs of their grandparents, their servants (or their slaves), and their neighbors. In this class, you will not only learn to analyze folklore but actually develop fieldwork skills as you gather folklore from your own local sources. We begin the course with examples from around the world: the German Brothers Grimm, the Scottish Robert Burns, the Americans Woody Guthrie and Zora Neale Hurston. Then we turn to Eastern Europe and the role it has played in the Western European and American imagination as the home of the archaic and the authentic, from the vampires of Transylvania to the oral epics of the Bosnian Serbs to the nostalgic image of the Jewish shtetl.

Gabriella Safran (Slavic)
Professor Safran has written books and articles about Russian and Yiddish literature and folklore. She is currently researching the relationship between literature and the history of listening in late imperial Russia.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Folksongs from around the world
Russian fairy tales
Bram Stoker, Dracula
Albert Lord, The Singer of Tales
“Fiddler on the Roof”
Mikhail Bulgakov, Master and Margarita

Baba Yaga from Vassilisa the Beautiful, 1899, Ivan Bilibin
World Archaeology and Global Heritage

Who owns the past?
Is cultural heritage a universal right?

This course interrogates the relationship between the past and the present through archaeology. Increasingly, heritage sites are flashpoints in cultural, economic, and religious conflicts around the globe. Clearly history matters — but how do certain histories come to matter in particular ways, and to whom? Through close study of important archaeological sites, you will learn to analyze landscapes, architecture, and objects, as well as reflect on the scholarly and public debates about history and heritage around the world. Far from being a neutral scholarly exercise, archaeology is embedded in the heated debates about heritage and present-day conflicts.

Ian Hodder (Anthropology and Archaeology)
For 20 years Professor Hodder has excavated in Turkey, where he runs a large international project. He writes about the spread of farming from the Middle East and about the role of cultural heritage in contemporary societies.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

The Archaeological Sites and Landscapes at:
Çatalhöyük – Turkey
Stanford University
Mesopotamia and Egypt
Ayodhya, India – Rama temple and Babri Mosque
Jerusalem – al-Haram ash-Sharif or the Temple Mount

Ancient agricultural tools
Spring Quarter *Thinking Matters* Courses

The Cancer Problem: Causes, Treatments, and Prevention  
Evil  
Evolution on Earth  
How Do You Build a Nation? Inclusion and Exclusion in the Making of Modern Iran  
Human Rights and Humanitarianism  
Media and Message  
Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital  
Race Matters  
Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity Since the Civil War  
Subversive Acts  
The Water Course
The Cancer Problem: Causes, Treatments, and Prevention

Approximately one in three Americans will develop invasive cancer during their lifetime; one in five Americans will die as a result of this disease. This course will expose you to multiple ways of approaching the cancer problem, including laboratory research, clinical trials, population studies, public health interventions and health care economics. We will start with the 18th century discovery of the relationship between coal tar and cancer, and trace the role of scientific research in revealing the genetic basis of cancer. We will then discuss the development of new treatments for cancer as well as measures to screen for and prevent cancer, including the ongoing debate over tobacco control. Using cancer as a case study, you will learn important aspects of the scientific method including experimental design, data analysis, and the difference between correlation and causation. You will learn how science can be used and misused with regard to the public good. You will also learn about ways in which social, political, and economic forces shape our knowledge about and response to disease.

How has our approach to cancer been affected by clinical observations, scientific discoveries, social norms, politics, and economic interests?

Joseph Lipsick (School of Medicine)
Professor Lipsick’s career as a poet went astray when he found a job at the unemployment office working in a laboratory, fell in love with research, and eventually became obsessed with understanding how mistakes in our own genes cause cancer. He is a professor of Pathology, Genetics, and Biology.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Siddhartha Mukherjee,
The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer

Rebecca Skloot,
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

Marcia Angell,
The Truth About Drug Companies

Jason Reitman,
Thank You for Not Smoking (film)

Carcinoma planos epitheliiale keratodes larygis
Picture made in Medical University in Łódź, Poland
Evil

What is evil? Are we naturally good or evil?
How should we respond to evil?

There are many books and courses that focus on the good life or the virtues. Yet despite their obvious apparent presence in our life and world, evil and the vices are rarely taken as explicit topics. We will read philosophical and literary texts that deal with the question of evil at an abstract level and then use other readings that help us focus on more practical implications of the meaning and consequences of evil. By exploring the issue of evil, we will confront larger questions about the nature of humans, the responsibility to address evil as a society, and the moral and ethical ways we might begin to define what is evil.

Chris Bobonich (Philosophy)
Professor Bobonich works on the history of Greek philosophy and is interested in questions that, if they can be answered, are not fully answered by the sciences.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Goethe,
Faust

Dostoevsky,
Notes from Underground

Machiavelli,
The Prince

Adam Smith,
Wealth of Nations

Fritz Lang, M (film)

The history of life on earth is inextricably intertwined with the history of geological change on earth. From a primordial soup containing building block molecules emerged early forms of single-celled organisms, which existed for billions of years as continents formed, moved, and dissolved. Multicellular forms evolved and changed as a result of atmospheric changes, the cooling of the earth, and the contributions of other living organisms. Early ideas about biological evolution came from young people who went on wild adventures. Their observations generated ideas about what must have happened; but since, at the time, little was known about the mechanisms of inheritance, they were never to know how it happened. In time, two major advances came along: a much more comprehensive fossil record that substantiated many of their ideas, and a deep understanding of genetic mechanisms of inheritance. In parallel, the idea of geologic forms as dynamic, especially vulcanism and plate tectonics, provided a new narrative of earth history that informed ideas about spreading and changing life forms. Then mechanisms of developmental biology showed how inherited genes carry out recipes for building bodies with certain structures. We will examine evolution from scientific, historical, and artistic perspectives, including evolution of microbes, plants, animals, and humans, and implications of evolution for medicine. The course will include introductory lectures, some in class and some online, discussion sessions, and three team projects for each student. Student teams will examine topics of their choosing in depth and create reports that will be assembled into a comprehensive book.

Matthew Scott (School of Medicine)
Professor Scott leads a research group that studies molecular and genetic mechanisms of developmental biology and their connections with cancer and birth defects, focusing particularly on evolutionarily ancient control systems that organize and pattern developing embryos. He is a professor of Developmental Biology, Genetics, Bioengineering, and Biology.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Charles Darwin,
*The Origin of Species*

Jonathan Weiner,
*The Beak of the Finch*

Neil Shubin,
*Your Inner Fish*

Walter Alvarez,
*T. rex and the Crater of Doom*
How Do You Build a Nation? 
Inclusion and Exclusion in the Making of Modern Iran

Why were minority religious groups excluded from the majority’s vision of a Shi’i Iranian nation? How and when were women included as citizens of a new Iran?

In this course, specific attention will be paid to key events of the 20th century that shaped modern Iran: the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11), the 1953 coup, the White Revolution (1963), the Islamic Revolution (1978-79), the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), and the post-revolutionary period in general. Through a close reading of key poems, short stories, and films created in this period, this course will identify major inclusionary and exclusionary forces in the process of nation-building in 20th-century Iran. Specific attention will be paid to issues of ethnicity, religion, and gender. In addition to reading texts (poetry and prose) and watching films, students will be called on to present critiques of these literary and cinematic products in the form of brief oral presentations and short writing assignments. The final project will involve interviewing Iranian expatriates on issues covered in the lectures. Students will work in small groups to produce short videos of these interpersonal encounters.

Dominic Parviz Brookshaw (Comparative Literature)
Professor Brookshaw has published widely on contemporary and pre-modern Persian literature, Iranian women writers, and non-Muslim minorities in 19th- and 20th-century Iran.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL
Sadeq Hedayat, selected short stories
Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, selected short stories
Forugh Farrokhzad, selected poems
Forugh Farrokhzad, *The House is Black* (film)
Bahram Beyzaie, *Bashu, The Little Stranger* (film)
Majid Majidi, *The Color of Paradise* (film)
Human Rights and Humanitarianism

Why do certain governments and citizens feel obliged to ease the suffering of distant people in need? How did the humanitarian sensibilities and human rights discourses that now define global politics come into being?

In this course, you will consider how contemporary ethical motivations for human rights and humanitarianism have developed. We will investigate the emergence and transformation of these ideas through the study of key historical events in the modern world — slavery and its abolition, colonialism, the World Wars, apartheid, decolonization, and the Cold War. We will then consider how this longer history has influenced the ways activists, NGOs, and governments today draw attention to global crises and abuses. Our ultimate objective is to gain an understanding of how the language and ideals of human rights and humanitarianism emerged from the context of liberalism, capitalism, and imperialism.

J.P. Daughton (History)
Professor Daughton is an historian of modern European and imperial history.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Bartolomé de las Casas,
*A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*

Mary Prince,
*The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*

Roger Casement,
*The 1903 Congo Report*

Aimé Césaire,
*Discourse on Colonialism*

Jamaica Kincaid,
*A Small Place*

Amartya Sen,
*Development as Freedom*
Visual media are conduits for information and narrative but are experienced very differently. We will explore a range of historical and contemporary media, with an emphasis on the ways that different media present, organize, and structure information as forms that are “read” or experienced. You will be asked to compare, for example, how two different media explore the same or similar content: examples of this kind of comparison might be a film Western and the video game Red Dead Redemption or the Book of Genesis and R. Crumb’s comic adaptation of the same text. We start with considerations of the illuminated book, print, painting, and photography and move to the more recent cinema, television, and interactive and computational media.

Henry Lowood (History of Science and Technology Collections, University Libraries)
Dr. Lowood is curator for history of science and technology collections and for film and media collections at Stanford University. He has led the Silicon Valley Archives since forever and, since 2000 he has led How They Got Game, a research and archival preservation project devoted to the history of digital games and simulations. His most recent book is The Machinima Reader, published by MIT Press and co-edited with Michael Nitsche.

Scott Bukatman (Art and Art History)
Professor Bukatman teaches in the Film and Media Studies Program, and his research highlights the ways in which popular media (film, comics) and genres (science fiction, musicals, superhero narratives) mediate between new technologies and human perceptual and bodily experience. His latest book is The Poetics of Slumberland: Animated Spirits and the Animating Spirit, and it makes a great gift.

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**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Marshall McLuhan,
*The Medium Is the Message*

Scott McCloud,
*Understanding Comics*

Charles S. Pierce,
“How to Make an Idea Clear”

Vivian Sobchack,
“The Scene of the Screen”

Walter Benjamin,
“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

John Berger,
*Ways of Seeing*
We like to think of social networks as a contemporary phenomenon. But before Facebook, individuals organized themselves in social networks; before Twitter, revolutionaries used media to communicate and coordinate their messages. In fact, even animal societies are networked. Through project-based exercises, you will learn to study, analyze, and write about networks from the perspectives of a biologist, a computer scientist, and a historian. We will retrace social networks in the 18th and 21st centuries, observe the organization of animal networks, and investigate the structure of online networks. Our goal is to use the concept of the network to deepen our understanding of the natural world, historical change, and our own social lives.

**Dan Edelstein (French and Italian)**
Professor Edelstein works on 18th-century intellectual networks and revolutions.

**Deborah Gordon (Biology)**
Professor Gordon studies ant societies in Arizona and Mexico.

**Eric Roberts (Computer Science)**
Professor Roberts has had a network address since 1970.

**SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL**

Deborah Gordon, 
*Ant Encounters: Interaction Networks and Colony Behavior*

Tom Standage, 
*The Victorian Internet*

Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page, 
“The anatomy of a large-scale hyper-textual Web search engine”

Lorraine Daston, 
“The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment”

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*Harvester ants*
Photo by Steve Jurvetson.
Going to school and work, renting an apartment, going to the doctor, watching television, voting, reading books and newspaper, or attending religious services are all activities that are influenced — consciously and unconsciously — by race and ethnicity. In this course, we will draw on scholarship from psychology, genetics, history, and cultural studies to understand contemporary racial formations and cultural representations. We will look at how recent research on the human genome has reinvigorated biological conceptions of race and ethnicity, engage in activities that highlight the psychological consequences of race and ethnicity, and analyze selected race-relevant memes that appear in popular media.

Paula Moya (English)
Professor Moya researches the relationship between identities, literature, and the production of knowledge.

Hazel Markus (Psychology)
Professor Markus studies the sociocultural shaping of self and society.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Hazel Markus and Paula Moya, eds., Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century

Sheldon Krimsky and Kathleen Sloan, Race and the Genetic Revolution

Toni Morrison, A Mercy

Stuart Hall, Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices

Race: The Power of an Illusion (film)
n 1865, the peace treaty was signed at Appomattox and the Thirteenth Amendment outlawed slavery, but the battle over memory and national identity had just begun. The questions that the Civil War addressed — and failed to address — continue to affect our lives today. We will focus on how Americans negotiated issues of cultural memory and national identity through a close analysis of historical texts, novels, poems, films, paintings, cartoons, photographs, and music. Our interpretations will foreground the particular themes of race and nationhood; freedom and citizenship; and changing notions of individual and collective identity. Our assumption in this course is that history is not available to us as a set of events — fixed, past, and unchanging. Rather, history is known through each generation's interpretations of those events, and these interpretations are shaped by each generation's lived experience. What stories get told? Whose? And in what ways? The stories we choose to tell about the past can shape not only our understanding of the present, but also the kind of future we can imagine and strive to realize.

Shelley Fisher Fishkin (English and American Studies)
Professor Fishkin’s research on race and American literature has been featured twice on the front page of the New York Times. She has long been fascinated with the ways in which literature and the arts can illuminate chapters of the past.

Allyson Hobbs (History)
Professor Hobbs’ research interests include identity formation, migration and urbanization, and the intersections of race, class, and gender. She is currently writing a book that examines the phenomenon of racial passing in the United States from the late 18th century to the present.

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Frederick Douglass,
*Narrative of the Life of a Slave, Written by Himself*

Mark Twain,
*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Stephen Crane,
*The Red Badge of Courage*

W.E.B. Du Bois,
*Black Reconstruction*

D.W. Griffith,
*The Birth of a Nation* (film)

David Bradley,
*The Chaneyville Incident*
Subversive Acts: Invention and Convention in the 20th Century

Can art subvert social practice and politics?

In this course, we will learn how to “read” art and analyze the ways aesthetic objects can raise larger conceptual questions about culture, society, and change. We will do this by investigating the broad range of artistic, social, and political meanings of the term “avant-garde” in the 20th century. The course looks at some of the key moments in avant-garde art in Europe, including Dadaism and Futurism, with a particular emphasis on Russia. Through an examination of various aesthetic case studies, we will be able to ask the larger question of whether art can actually challenge social conventions and established political ideologies.

Nariman Skakov (Slavic)
Professor Skakov works on Andrei Platonov, the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky and Rustam Khamdamov, literary theory (Bakhtin and Shklovsky in particular), Moscow conceptualism (Ilya Kabakov, Vladimir Sorokin), intersections between the textual and the visual, and the Soviet “Orient.”

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

- Marcel Duchamp, “Fountain”
- Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Futurist Cookbook*
- Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*
- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
- Vladimir Sorokin, *The Dostoevsky Trip*
- David Lynch, *Inland Empire* (film)
Water is essential for life. But, around the world, governments and citizens are challenged to balance the human demands on our freshwater resources, while protecting the integrity of natural ecosystems. At the core of the challenge is our limited understanding, in many parts of the world, of the watershed-scale hydrologic cycle — the course that the water follows from rainfall, to river, to groundwater, to ocean, to atmosphere, and back again. The Water Course takes students along that course, exploring the role that natural systems and human systems play in impacting both the quantity and quality of our freshwater. We will consider the scientific and ethical questions surrounding decisions about water allocation, and discuss new scientific methods that provide support for science-based decision making in the management of freshwater resources. You will connect global-scale issues to your personal experiences with freshwater through a quarter-long project investigating both water quantity and water quality in your hometown and surrounding watershed. You will produce a numerical model, and make approximations, to describe a complex natural system. Using online resources you will explore the pathway that water takes from rainfall to your tap.

Rosemary Knight (Geophysics)
Professor Knight’s research and teaching interests focus on the use of geophysical imaging methods to “see into Earth” for groundwater evaluation and management.

How can we balance all the competing, and growing, demands for freshwater? When you turn on your tap, where does the water come from?

SELECTED COURSE MATERIAL

Selected topics:
Water in Nature
Water Quality
Freshwater as a Managed Resource
Modeling a Complex System
Frequently Asked Questions

How do these courses provide a solid foundation for my freshman year?

Thinking Matters, SLE, and ESF courses provide a common point of transition to Stanford, as you join with the rest of your class in the experience of exploring enduring questions and perennial problems faced by humanity and society. Students report that the small-group discussions where you investigate these profound questions and perplexing issues often lead to new friendships that last throughout their undergraduate years.

Why is there an emphasis on the residential aspect of SLE?

SLE aims to bring together the intellectual and residential lives of its students. It provides the opportunity to discuss the humanities with a community that shares more than just a classroom. For more information, see the SLE website at http://sle.stanford.edu.

Who teaches the section discussions?

Instructors holding doctoral degrees lead sections of about 10 students each. They are selected in a highly competitive international search: for each lecturer position, there are about 40 applications from scholars who have recently earned doctorates from leading universities around the world. Each Thinking Matters and SLE lecturer meets rigorous standards for scholarship and teaching. Only those candidates with proven excellence and experience in leading seminar discussions with first-year students receive serious consideration for these positions.

How do these particular courses, of the many hundreds of others in the Stanford curriculum, meet the needs of freshman in building a strong intellectual foundation at Stanford?

Thinking Matters courses are specially designed to develop a set of skills and abilities identified by the Faculty Senate as crucial for the first-year of undergraduate education at Stanford. Every Thinking Matters course is reviewed by a Governance Board consisting of faculty, students, and post-doctoral fellows to ensure that the course material is aligned with the goals of the requirement and that the teaching quality meets a high standard of excellence.

How should I choose my Thinking Matters course?

You might think about challenging yourself with an unfamiliar topic and texts or deepening your knowledge about a favorite topic from different perspectives. After reading the descriptions and looking at the booklists, you might look up the professors on the Stanford website and find out about their other teaching and scholarly interests. Or, you might read reviews and summaries of the listed texts and authors. When you find a personal connection, trust your instincts and choose.

I plan to major in the sciences. Is SLE primarily for humanities majors?

SLE students go on to major in all departments of the university. Many prospective science majors enroll in SLE because SLE’s year-long, chronological approach to the humanities provides a logically ordered structure for studying the history of ideas.

Will I be assigned to my first choice?

We expect that more than 95% of students will be placed in their first or second choices. A few Thinking Matters courses have special activities such as labs and team projects that limit the total number of spaces for that course, but generally the reservation system is flexible enough to accommodate your highest-ranked preferences.

Because we have to rank three different courses as #1, one in each quarter, how are you going to reserve a space for me to satisfy the requirement without collecting my quarterly preference?

The reservation algorithm, after taking into consideration courses with limited spaces due to special activities, will spread the reservations across the year. You can request a change, or you can take all three of your #1-ranked courses if your schedule permits.

How can I plan my other courses around Thinking Matters or SLE?

The University’s online catalog includes descriptions and meeting times of courses for the entire academic year. This information is available through Axess in August and will enable you to plan for the year.

Once I receive my Thinking Matters course reservation, can I change it?

Yes. Over the summer, you’ll receive information about the online course change request process.

How will I know the location and time for my course lecture and discussion section?

Axess provides all classroom locations and times. For the most current information, consult the online version, which is updated daily.

I’m a varsity athlete and have to attend practice every day, and my friend is in ROTC and needs to spend some time off campus every week. How can students like us fit a Thinking Matters course into our schedules?

Thinking Matters lectures are offered either Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. You should be able to enroll in one that accommodates your obligations. The discussion sections accompanying the Thinking Matters courses are scheduled at a range of different times, including evenings. The reservation system takes into account the scheduled practice times for varsity athletes, supplied to Thinking Matters by advisors in the Athletic Department. If you have a schedule conflict, you will be able to request a change in your course and/or section.

Where do I find the Thinking Matters and SLE course preference form? And how do I return it?

Rank your preferences for Autumn, Winter, and Spring Thinking Matters courses and/or SLE by filling out Form 4 online at http://frosh.stanford.edu. Make sure you’ve submitted this form, as well as the remainder of your reply forms, online, by the June deadline.

In August, after I find out the course and quarter for which I have a reserved space to meet the freshman requirement, how do I go about taking additional, elective Thinking Matters courses?

If you would like to sign up for another class, we will have an online system in place to handle these requests every quarter. In the few cases where spaces are limited and a course may be full, we may suggest alternatives for your consideration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>Landy, Josh</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>Taylor, Kenneth</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioethical Challenges of New Technology</td>
<td>Magnus, David</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Codes, Finding Patterns</td>
<td>Holmes, Susan</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>Fishkin, James</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>Rakove, Jack</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cancer Problem</td>
<td>Lipsett, Joseph</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Century of Violence</td>
<td>Weiner, Amir</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>Karlan, Pamela</td>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>Reich, Rob</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>Steyer, James</td>
<td>Center for Studies in Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>Harrison, Robert</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>Wittman, Laura</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: Building a Philosophical Way of Life</td>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: In Pursuit of Knowledge, Justice, and Truth</td>
<td>Saller, Richard</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: Learning for a Public Life</td>
<td>Edelstein, Dan</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: Rigorous and Precise Thinking</td>
<td>Vakil, Ravi</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>Hoxby, Blair</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>Hoxby, Caroline</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Life: How History Happens</td>
<td>Sheffer, Edith</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>Bobonich, Chris</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution on Earth</td>
<td>Scott, Matthew</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe</td>
<td>Friedman, Michael</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do You Build a Nation</td>
<td>Brookshaw, Dominic</td>
<td>Comparative Literature</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Your Brain Work?</td>
<td>Fernald, Russell</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights and Humanitarianism</td>
<td>Daughton, J.P.</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the Universe Just? Explorations in the Classics</td>
<td>McCall, Marsh</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>Wolff, Tobias</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>Yearley, Lee</td>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>Bukatman, Scott</td>
<td>Art and Art History</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>Lowood, Henry</td>
<td>History of Science and Technology Collections</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>Edelstein, Dan</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>Gordon, Deborah</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>Boland, Eavan</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>Carter, Steven</td>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>Markus, Hazel</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>Moya, Paula</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellious Daughters, Filial Sons of the Chinese Family</td>
<td>Wang, Ban</td>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity</td>
<td>Fishkin, Shelley Fisher</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity</td>
<td>Hobbs, Allyson</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>Sagan, Scott</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>Weiner, Allen</td>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>Block, Steven</td>
<td>Applied Physics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>Pande, Vijay</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>Skotheim, Jan</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subversive Acts</td>
<td>Skakov, Mariman</td>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability and Collapse</td>
<td>Zoback, Mark</td>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>Robinson, Rob</td>
<td>German Studies</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate Meanings</td>
<td>Weitzman, Steven</td>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voyages and Visionaries</td>
<td>Parker, Grant</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voyages and Visionaries</td>
<td>Wigen, Kären</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Water Course</td>
<td>Knight, Rosemary</td>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Do We Like (to Read) about Vampires?</td>
<td>Safran, Gabriella</td>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Archaeology and Global Heritage</td>
<td>Hodder, Ian</td>
<td>Anthropology and Archaeology</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Department Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Physics</td>
<td>Block, Steven</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>Hodder, Ian</td>
<td>World Archaeology and Global Heritage</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Art History</td>
<td>Bukatman, Scott</td>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Fernald, Russell</td>
<td>How Does Your Brain Work?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Cordon, Deborah</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Skotheim, Jan</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Studies in Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td>Steyer, James</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Pande, Vijay</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>McCall, Marsh</td>
<td>Is the Universe Just? Explorations in the Classics</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>Parker, Grant</td>
<td>Voyagers and Visionaries</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>Saller, Richard</td>
<td>ESF: In Pursuit of Knowledge, Justice, and Truth</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Fishkin, James</td>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Literature</td>
<td>Brookshaw, Dominic</td>
<td>How Do You Build a Nation?</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>Carter, Steven</td>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>Wang, Ban</td>
<td>Rebellious Daughters, Filial Sons of the Chinese Family</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Hoxby, Caroline</td>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Boland, Eavan</td>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Fishkin, Shelley Fisher</td>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hoxby, Blair</td>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Moya, Paula</td>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Wolff, Tobias</td>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Edelstein, Dan</td>
<td>ESF: Learning for a Public Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Edelstein, Dan</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Harrison, Robert</td>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Landy, Josh</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Wittman, Laura</td>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>Knight, Rosemary</td>
<td>The Water Course</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>Zoback, Mark</td>
<td>Sustainability and Collapse</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Studies</td>
<td>Robinson, Rob</td>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Daughton, J.P.</td>
<td>Human Rights and Humanitarianism</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Hobbs, Allyson</td>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Rakove, Jack</td>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Shaffer, Edith</td>
<td>Everyday Life: How History Happens</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Weiner, Amir</td>
<td>Century of Violence</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Wigen, Kären</td>
<td>Voyagers and Visionaries</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Science and Technology Collections</td>
<td>Lowood, Henry</td>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Vakil, Ravi</td>
<td>ESF: Rigorous and Precise Thinking</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>ESF: Building a Philosophical Way of Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Bobonich, Chris</td>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Friedman, Michael</td>
<td>From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Taylor, Kenneth</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Reich, Rob</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Sagan, Scott</td>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Markus, Hazel</td>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Weitzman, Steven</td>
<td>Ultimate Meanings</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Yearley, Lee</td>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>Karlan, Pamela</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>Weiner, Allen</td>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>Lipstick, Joseph</td>
<td>The Cancer Problem</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>Magnus, David</td>
<td>Bioethical Challenges of New Technology</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>Scott, Matthew</td>
<td>Evolution on Earth</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>Safran, Gabriella</td>
<td>Why Do We Like (to Read) about Vampires?</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>Skakov, Nariman</td>
<td>Subversive Acts</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Holmes, Susan</td>
<td>Breaking Codes, Finding Patterns</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Faculty Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, R. Lanier</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>ESF: Building a Philosophical Way of Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block, Steven</td>
<td>Applied Physics</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobonich, Chris</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boland, Eavan</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks, Josephine</td>
<td>Comparative Literature</td>
<td>How Do You Build a Nation</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukatman, Scott</td>
<td>Art and Art History</td>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter, Steven</td>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>The Poet Re-making the World</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughton, J.P.</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Human Rights and Humanitarianism</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edelman, Dan</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>ESF: Learning for a Public Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edelman, Dan</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernald, Russell</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>How Does Your Brain Work?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishkin, James</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishkin, Shelley Fisher</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity Since the Civil War</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedman, Michael</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon, Deborah</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison, Robert</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbs, Allyson</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Reimagining America: Cultural Memory and Identity Since the Civil War</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodder, Ian</td>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>World Archaeology and Global Heritage</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes, Susan</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Breaking Codes, Finding Patterns</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoxby, Blair</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoxby, Caroline</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>ESF: The Active, Inquiring, Beautiful Life</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karlan, Pamela</td>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, Rosemary</td>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>The Water Course</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landy, Josh</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipsick, Joseph</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>The Cancer Problem</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowood, Henry</td>
<td>History of Science and Technology Collections</td>
<td>Media and Message</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus, David</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>Bioethical Challenges of New Technology</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Hazel</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCall, Marsh</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>Is the Universe Just? Explorations in the Classics</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moya, Paula</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Race Matters</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pande, Vijay</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker, Grant</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>Voyagers and Visionaries</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakove, Jack</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Can the People Rule?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reich, Rob</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Networks: Ecological, Revolutionary, Digital</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, Eric</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Rob</td>
<td>German Studies</td>
<td>Technological Visions of Utopia</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safran, Gabriella</td>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>Why Do We Like (to Read) about Vampires?</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagan, Scott</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailer, Richard</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>ESF: In Pursuit of Knowledge, Justice, and Truth</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Matthew</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>Evolution on Earth</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffer, Edith</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Everyday Life: How History Happens</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skakov, Niran</td>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>Subversive Acts</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skotheim, Jan</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>The Science of MythBusters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steyer, James</td>
<td>Center for Studies in Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td>Constituting Justice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Kenneth</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>The Art of Living</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vakil, Ravi</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>ESF: Rigorous and Precise Thinking</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang, Ban</td>
<td>East Asian Languages and Cultures</td>
<td>Rebellious Daughters, Filial Sons of the Chinese Family</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiner, Allen</td>
<td>School of Law</td>
<td>Rules of War</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiner, Amir</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Century of Violence</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weitzman, Steven</td>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Ultimate Meanings</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigen, Kaaren</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Voyages and Visionaries</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wittman, Laura</td>
<td>French and Italian</td>
<td>Epic Journeys</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolff, Tobias</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearley, Lee</td>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoback, Mark</td>
<td>Geophysics</td>
<td>Sustainability and Collapse</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinking Matters courses offer you the opportunity to select among a wide range of topics, as you join with the rest of the Class of 2016 in a common freshman experience. Each course addresses important questions and problems, and demonstrates how thoughtful consideration can address them. Your freedom to choose from among these courses signals that it is your responsibility to structure your liberal education. Stanford invites you to identify your top priority, and you will also have the opportunity to enroll in more than one Thinking Matters course during your freshman year."

—Russell Berman,
Director, Thinking Matters Program, Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities