ISEM 301 Seminar Descriptions – Spring 2014

ISEM 301 sec. 2
Informing Spatial Agency: Place, Culture, Identity & Community
Instructor: Rula Awwad-Rafferty

An interdisciplinary seminar focusing on creative interventions that inform and build SPATIAL AGENCY, locally and globally, connecting diverse expertise with identity, culture, and community nationally and internationally. The seminar will also be linked with the College of Art and Architectures Inspiring Design annual symposium. It will offer opportunities for critical examination of pressing and great issues in multiple theoretical and applied perspectives, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to environmental design, applications in the arts and culture, and planning policy. **Note: attendance at the Inspiring Design Futures Symposium April 3rd required.**

ISEM 301 sec. 3 (WWW)
Disparities in Obesity and Health
Instructor: Chantal A. Vella,

This online seminar will explore health disparities relevant to the US and discuss environmental, social, behavioral, and genetic factors associated with health disparities. The seminar will cover disparities in obesity, physical activity, food access, overall mortality, diabetes, and health with length of stay in the US (Latino paradox). Students will explore individual-level, community-level, and state-level strategies needed to lessen the gap in these health disparities. The seminar will provide a multidisciplinary approach to understanding health disparities, factors that contribute to health disparities and strategies to lessen the health disparities that impact our nation’s health and escalating healthcare costs.

ISEM 301 sec. 4
Inspiring Lives
Instructors: George Newcombe and Scott Slovic

The life stories of great scientists and scholars are inspiring in part because their remarkable insights are often rejected or ignored when first proposed. Their life stories are about persistence and courage in the face of opposition, as much as they are about particular discoveries. Three of the six subjects of this course were central to the development of evolutionary theory (Charles Darwin), genetics (Gregor Mendel), and microbiology and medicine (Louis Pasteur) in the 19th century. Two (Alice Kober and Michael Ventris) were scholars who, by 1952, had largely deciphered Linear B, an unknown script of an unknown language discovered earlier in the century in Crete. The last scientist and scholar whom we will discuss is Barbara McClintock, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1983 for her work in genetics.

All six faced contemporaries and colleagues in science who opposed them. Late in life, Darwin, for example, was challenged in ways that shook his confidence in his theory of natural selection.
even though his challengers were eventually shown to be wrong. Vindication came for all six scientists, but late in their lives or posthumously.

Misunderstandings and controversy about each of the six linger. For example, from the mid-19th century to the present, some people have believed that Darwin was attempting to replace religion with atheism. Some people continue to wonder whether Darwin’s chief contribution was not what is called ‘Social Darwinism’. Misquotes, a mythical deathbed conversion, and the idea that “we come from monkeys” have all been wrongly attributed to Darwin. In this seminar course we will investigate misunderstandings and controversies such as these, and others related to Mendel, Pasteur, Kober, Ventris, and McClintock. But we will spend more time on the attempt to fully appreciate two themes: (A) the discoveries of these six people in the context of their times, and (B) the way that their discoveries have become integrated into our culture, even outside the boundaries of science and scholarship.

For instance, how did we think about time before the implications of the geological/evolutionary scale started to sink in? In what ways was our culture changed by specific ideas about inheritance? To what did we formerly attribute the myriad activities of microbes before we knew that they existed? Finally, how have these shifts been reflected in the work of creative writers?

Faced with considerable antagonism each of these six remarkable individuals found their way. Is this the essence of an ‘Inspiring Life’, or can our discussions reveal more than that?

ISEM 301 sec. 5
Celebrating Idaho Agriculture
Instructor: Jim Connors

Agriculture is the leading industry in Idaho. The agricultural industry stretches from the woodlands of northern Idaho, to the rolling hills of the Palouse, to the potato fields of southeastern Idaho. Thousands of people are involved in the production, processing, transportation, and marketing of agricultural commodities across the state. However, agriculture is an industry that is constantly challenged and changing. Issues such as transportation, soil conservation, water rights/irrigation, grazing, and labor are just some issues agricultural professionals face every day.

ISEM 301 sec. 6, 8 and 9
Communication & Culture
Instructor: Linda Taylor
    Section 06: African-American Culture
    Section 08: World Culture
    Section 09: Native American Culture

These seminars provide an introduction to the field of communication and culture by looking at the practical application of theory and research, with each seminar addressing a different culture: African-American, Native American and World. They each focus on fundamental
conceptual and practical dimensions of intercultural communication in everyday life and social interactions in multicultural environments. They identify the key challenges presented by intercultural interaction both at home and abroad and how those challenges affect people, their jobs, and their relationships. They also focus on the strategies and skills needed to deal effectively with these challenges in a broad variety of interaction contexts. These seminars aim at developing an individual's intellectual appreciation for cultural differences and sensitivity regarding intercultural interactions. **NOTE: attendance at certain on-campus events required.**

ISEM 301 sec. 7  
The Dust Bowl – An American Ecological Disaster  
Instructors: John Hammel and Katherine Aiken

The Dust Bowl region of the southern Great Plains was devastated by a decade of drought and horrific wind erosion in the 1930’s while the US was battling a severe economic depression. This environmental disaster degraded more than 150 million farmland acres and caused an exodus of over 2 million people from the Plains states, many to the western US. This drought period, which lasted from the early 1930’s through the early 1940’s, is considered to be the severest historically in the Great Plains. Importantly, the combination of poor agricultural practices, harsh drought, and economic hardship created the worst ecological catastrophe ever to occur in the US. The Dust Bowl period in US history will be examined through America’s agriculture, its economic and social fabric, and its art and literature.