

AMHERST COLLEGE



RESEARCH TUTORIALS IN THE HUMANITIES AND “HUMANISTIC” SOCIAL SCIENCES SPRING 2024

Research Tutorials, which are listed in the college catalog as colloquia, offer faculty and students the opportunity to collaborate on shared research projects. The enrollment for each tutorial is limited to six students. Offered for sophomores and juniors, the courses present ongoing research on a series of related questions in the faculty member’s area of expertise. By exploring how different scholars approach a topic, students learn to frame a research question, develop research strategies, and identify and use sources. Students pursue a research topic that dovetails closely with the professor’s scholarly interests.

Students enrolled in these courses are guaranteed funding for six weeks of work and housing during the summer following the academic year in which they take the course.

Continue on to read more about courses being offered this Spring.....

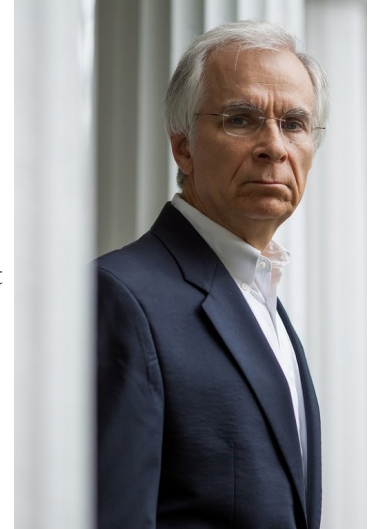
***RESEARCH TUTORIALS in the HUMANITIES and
“HUMANISTIC” SOCIAL SCIENCES***

America’s Death Penalty

COLQ 234

Professor Sarat

The United States, almost alone among constitutional democracies, retains death as a criminal punishment. It does so in the face of growing international pressure for abolition and of evidence that the system for deciding who lives and who dies is fraught with error. This seminar is designed to expose students to America’s death penalty as a *researchable subject*. It will be organized to help students understand how research is framed in this area, analyze theories and approaches of death penalty researchers, and identify open questions and most promising lines of future research. It will focus on the following dimensions of America’s death penalty: its history, current status, public support/opposition, the processing of capital cases in the criminal justice system, race and capital punishment, and its impact and efficacy. During the seminar, each student will develop a prospectus for a research project on America’s death penalty. This course is part of a tutorial series that engages Amherst students in substantive research with faculty in the humanities and humanistic social sciences.



Open to Sophomores and Juniors interested in research.

Enrollment will be limited to 6.

Islanders Abroad in the 19th Century

COLQ 350

Professor Melillo

Pacific Islander protagonists are conspicuously absent from nineteenth-century travel writing. Even so, myriad voyagers from Oceania journeyed to the furthest reaches of the planet in the 1800s, generating intercultural encounters and returning to their archipelagic homelands with news of the outside world. This research tutorial focuses on Indigenous Pacific Islander women and men who travelled to the United States, Europe, China, and Japan during the nineteenth century. Over the past decade, new searchable websites containing millions of pages of newspapers and other printed materials from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Fiji, Hawaii, Tahiti, and Tonga have come online. These vast clearinghouses for primary source materials offer possibilities for adding nuance, thick description, and multiple viewpoints to accounts of Pacific Islander journeys. Students in this tutorial will conduct research on these voyages, and we will publish our findings as part of an ongoing Pacific Islander history blog project.



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Instructor Approval Required.

Enrollment will be limited to 6 students.

**RESEARCH TUTORIALS in the HUMANITIES and
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Keystone Kin

COLQ 328

Professor Brooks

“It is impossible in our language [Anishinaabemowin] to speak of other living beings as it... The denial of personhood to all other beings is increasingly being refuted by science itself... We’re at the edge of a revolution in really understanding the sentience of other living beings.”

Robin Kimmerer, Potawatomi Botanist, Author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and 2022 MacArthur Fellow

What does it mean to understand ecosystems as kinship networks in which we are embedded? Both eastern coyotes and beavers have been described as “keystone species,” but what happens when we think about them in relationship, both to each other and to the many beings who depend on them? What if we think of them not as separate species but as keystone kin? What can we learn from their own kinship dynamics, how they learn and adapt as families in particular places? In this research seminar, we will pay close attention to eastern coyotes, usually described as newcomers, and to beavers, who were “exterminated” then returned, in places close to Amherst College as well as in historical sources. We will track coyotes in wetlands created by beavers, from the Wildlife Sanctuary to Quabbin Reservoir. We will watch how beavers transform waterways, even over the course of a semester. We will read Amherst alum Ben Goldfarb’s *Eager* and historian Dan Flores’s *Coyote America*, as well as relevant articles and primary sources, such as newspaper accounts. In addition to crossing streams and wetlands, students will be encouraged to cross disciplinary boundaries, blending science, history and literature. In Indigenous stories, for example, Coyote and Beaver are creators, shapers of the lands and waters on which people depend. As Kimmerer observes, this a time when science and traditional knowledge are coming to a confluence. Beavers, Goldfarb notes, “represent a promising adaptation strategy” for climate change: “by slowing, spreading, storing and sinking meltwater and runoff, they can help us compensate...for fast-vanishing glaciers and snowpack. They also have a role to play in mitigation—in keeping carbon out of the atmosphere in the first place.” In a time of climate crisis, Flores has written of coyotes, “it might be wise to keep an eye on them.”



Students will develop skills in reading landscapes (including animal track and sign), digital mapping/storytelling, and close reading texts. Students will work on collaborative projects, with the opportunity to continue this work as paid interns during the summer. Small groups may create digital databases and story maps that document the “liberation” and return of beavers in the Northeast, and the arrival of eastern coyotes, in relation to world fairs, railroads and reservoirs. Others may focus on creating public projects that highlight the adaptation of both beavers and coyotes on Amherst College land and local conservation areas.

This course is part of a tutorial series that engages Amherst students in substantive research with faculty in the humanities and humanistic social sciences.

Open to sophomores and juniors. Limited to 6 students. Spring Semester. Professor Brooks.

**Watch for these courses to appear in Workday.
Pre-Registration is strongly recommended.**

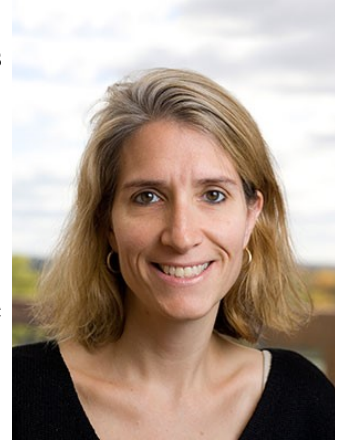
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Social Norms, Social Change

COLQ 339

Professor Sanderson

Social norms, the unwritten rules that shape our behavior, influence virtually all aspects of our lives, from the clothes we wear to the car we drive to whether and how we vote. Although people follow these norms to fit in with their social group, they can also make crucial errors in their perception, which can lead to substantial consequences. This seminar is designed to help students examine the power of social norms, the factors that lead people to misperceive norms, and the consequences of such misperceptions. We'll then turn to examining real-world interventions designed to shift social norms to change various types of behavior, from reducing bullying or binge drinking to increasing energy conservation and voting. Students enrolled in this course will stay on campus for six weeks during the summer of 2024 to assist with designing and conducting research on police culture (and will receive guaranteed funding as well as free room and board). This work will include reviewing empirical literature on active bystanders training programs, designing appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures for collecting data on police culture, traveling to police departments in the Northeast to conduct in-person interviews and administer surveys, coding interview transcripts, and conducting statistical analyses. Students will also have the opportunity to present this research at a national conference and to co-author a paper for a peer-reviewed journal.



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*RESEARCH TUTORIALS in the HUMANITIES and
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Environmental Wars

COLQ 264

Professor Mattiacci

Just like other primates, humans fight most wars to control territory. But humans seem to be the only primates that intentionally destroy their enemy's territory as a war strategy. So what brings humans to destroy the very territory over which they started a war? To answer this question, this research seminar will leverage insights from a diverse set of disciplines across several fields of study. It will draw from theories of primates' territorial control in biology, but also theories of emotions and short vs long-term biases in psychology, as well as insights from history on the memorialization of conflict, international law understandings of environmental destruction, and theories of the causes and consequences of wars from political science and economics. The seminar will explore empirical and theoretical research in the social sciences: identifying a question, composing a literature review, collecting data, and testing hypotheses. For this seminar, students will each develop a prospectus for a research project on the topic of environmental destruction.



This course is part of a model of tutorials at Amherst designed to enable students to engage in substantive research with faculty.

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Enrollment will be limited to 6.

