## SPRING 2018 STUDY GROUPS

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Institute for Retired Professionals
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Cosmology is the study of the origin, evolution and fate of the Universe. Every one of us has looked up at the night sky and wondered: What is my place in the Universe? No more than a week goes by without news of a cosmological discovery worthy of newspaper headlines. This study group provides the participant with an understanding of these cosmological discoveries. Some basic cosmological subjects are: What was the beginning of the Universe? What are Black Holes, Gravitational Waves, Dark Matter and Dark Energy? Why does time and space change for someone moving or near massive objects? How does the Universe change as a function of time? Is our Universe unique? These and other subjects will be discussed.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Books, any edition:
A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking
A Universe From Nothing by Lawrence M. Krauss

Additional material will be provided by email for each week.

Reuven Opher  PhD, Harvard University, was Physics Professor for twenty years at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology and Professor of Astronomy for thirty years at the University of Sao Paulo.

********* Syllabus - A Work in Progress *********
(I) Hawking
(II) Krauss

Weeks:
1) “History of Cosmology” pp. 1-14 (I): a) What are the descriptions of the Universe through history? b) What is the present model of the Universe?
3) "The Expanding Universe" pp. 37-54 (I) and pp. 1-22 (II):  a) What is the evidence that the Universe is expanding? b) What are the observations determining the age of the expanding universe?
5) “The Uncertainty Principle” pp. 55-64 (I) and pp. 55-74 (II)
6) “Observing Primordial Radiation and Nucleosynthesis” pp. 39-54 (II)
9) “The Exponential Expansion of the Primordial Universe” pp. 91-104, 153-170 (II)
10)“Is Our Universe A Grand Accident?” pp.121-140 (II)
11) “Multiverse” pp. 171-180 (II)
12) “Conclusions” pp. 187-191 (I)
READING ULYSSES

**Coordinators:** Ted Gannon and Harry Levy

Nabokov called it a divine work of art. Orwell said it gave him an inferiority complex. Banned as obscene for years after its publication, it has been called one of the world’s most challenging and unreadable books; it is also regarded as among the English language’s greatest literary works. Written by James Joyce over seven years in an unorthodox, stream of consciousness style, *Ulysses* examines every minute of a day in the life of three people and deals with what makes a heroic life in the 20th century. It demonstrates Joyce’s virtuosity using metaphors, symbolism, ambiguity and nuance to create a masterpiece of modernist literature. Over the next two years, we read every word of *Ulysses* and, through discussion and analysis, try to unlock its soul. T. S. Eliot believed that any episode can be read as a freestanding novel. We begin this semester with Episode Seven, pg. 96.

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**

*Ulysses* - The Gabler Edition

Ted Gannon has coordinated many study groups during his tenure at IRP, several about James Joyce.

Harry Levy is a retired businessman who has also had experience with Joyce study groups and is also conversant with Joyce’s life.
Homosexuality moves front and center in the fourth novel of Proust's epic *In Search of Lost Time*. The opening of *Sodom and Gomorrah* - a conjunction between two men - is aligned with a bee buzzing an orchid. Interwoven in this shocking scene are Jews; they are like those "inverts" themselves - different, reviled and excluded but their beauty and inner lives are recognized by the narrator-voyeur. Marcel tortures himself about Albertine and her girlfriends. Does she or doesn't she sleep with them? Along with the heavy emphasis on the sexual universe, the grand themes of society, nature and art abide; the Dreyfus Affair still rotates the social kaleidoscope. Our sustained review of previous volumes, aided by Alexander's *Guide*, ushers new readers into the Proust world - narrative, themes and characters.

**Reading:**


**Sharon** has coordinated study groups in philosophy, the philosophical novel and history: Machiavelli, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Proust, the Dreyfus Affair. Her favorite project as a humanities computer programmer was designing and building an archaeology model for a dig on Cyprus.

**** Syllabus for Proust IV: Sodom and Gomorrah ****

The page number on the left points to a page or a text block on that page; for example, 17.2 refers to text block 2 on page 18. The questions are optional.
Session 1 pages 1 - 44
The narrator (i.e., the "I") discovers the true nature of M. Charlus. The bee enters the courtyard as does Charlus. The race of "inverts" and the race of Jews have much in common. There is beauty among them. But after all that, I missed the fertilization of the orchid by the bee.

1 Where am I? Why am I here? What am I looking at right now?
5.1 What does the figure of Charlus suggest to me?
17.2 How had the scene opened my eyes?
20-22 What is the connection of Jews and inverts? And generally, are the three "dimensions" of this section (i.e., inverts, Jews, bee/orchid) connected? How?
24-27 Who are the solitaries? How do the poor inverts who “come up from the country” compare with them?
35 What is the story of the “twice-abandoned friend?”
38 What consideration causes me to consider the scene I had witnessed as “instinct with beauty?”

Session 2 pages 45 - 108.1
At the soirée of the Prince and Princess de Guermantes I maneuver to get myself introduced to the host. He arouses much whispered speculation when he retreats out of sight with Swann for a private chat. The duc de Guermantes comes down hard on Swann's dreyfusism. I recognize the voice quality and secret glances of the many inverts at the gathering.

49 Why did the duc d'Châtellerault see himself "ruined" when he recognized the usher?
69 What's good about a little insomnia?
101 What explanations do Bréauté and de Froberville give for the private conversation between the Prince and Swann

Session 3 pages 108.2 - 170.1
Changed views and changed appearances.

121.2 How has Swann changed?
129 How has Saint-Loup changed since he broke up with Rachel?
What does Swann tell us about the Prince's conversation with him? How has the Prince changed with respect to his views on Dreyfus?

Why does the Duke ignore the news about his cousin's death?
THE BIG ORANGE: WRITING LOS ANGELES

Coordinator: Tom Grant

The City That New Yorkers Love to Hate evolved improbably from an arid, literally unstable landscape prone to earthquake and fire; but that hasn’t stopped millions from seeking bonanza fortunes, political asylum, better health, another (or last) chance or just a comfortable place in the proverbial sun. Many of these have been gifted writers who, along with other creative people, became fascinated, or appalled, or both, by the rich creative possibilities of working in what poet Robinson Jeffers aptly called "the drop-off cliff of the world."

In this study group we try to get beyond the familiar putdowns—“tinseltown,” “lalaland”—to examine the city’s unique cultural history, propelled by booster-created myths of white hegemony and promises of unlimited prosperity and personal salvation, that has paradoxically become the acknowledged Pacific rim megalopolis of diverse, compelling cultural expressions.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
and a coursepack.

Tom Grant harbors an ongoing fascination with the history of his hometown, but cannot curb his enthusiasm for living in his adopted home in Manhattan.

****************** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ******************

Week 1: The Mission Myth: Anglo Appropriation of Mexican History
Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, pp. 17-30, 106-125
Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*, excerpts
Casey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land*, pp. 70-83
Week 2: Searching for Redemption: The Cult Phenomenon
H. L. Mencken, "Sister Aimee"
PBS American Experience, "Sister Aimee" film
James Roth, "Jesus in Tomorrowland," TNR (Nov. 27, 1976)
Mike Davis, City of Quartz, pp. 54-63

Week 3: Hyper-realities: Venice Beach, Forest Lawn, Disneyland
Evelyn Waugh, "Death in Hollywood"
Umberto Eco, "City of Robots"

Week 4: Bordertown: The "Pachuco Problem"
Casey McWilliams, "Blood on the Pavements"
Octavio Paz, from The Labyrinth of Solitude"

Week 5: L. A. Noir
Davis, City of Quartz, pp. 36-46
Raymond Chandler, Red Wind

Week 6: L. A. Angst: Joan Didion Country
Didion, "Los Angeles Notebook", "Fire Season," "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream"

Week 7: Hollywood Studio Visionary: Irving Thalberg
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Love of the Last Tycoon

Week 8: South Central: Watts, Before and After the Burnings
Chester Himes, The Quality of Hurt, excerpts
Charles Mingus, Beneath the Underdog, excerpts

Week 9: Pacific Rim Metropolis: From "Sonoratown" to the Capital of Mexamerica
Ruben Martinez, "Growing Up in L. A."
Mary Helen Ponce, "Las Vistas"

Week 10: Autopia: Car Culture and Art
Cees Nooteboom, "Autopia"
Tom Wolfe, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby"

Week 11: The Architectural Scene
Reyner Banham, "The Architecture of Four Ecologies"
Week 12: The Art Scene: David Hockney
David Hockney, *David Hockney*
Hooray for Hollywood! With the coming of talking motion pictures, musical films emerged from their roots: stage musicals, operettas, cabaret, music halls and vaudeville. Movie musicals reach into our hearts and linger “like the bubbles in a glass of champagne.” With Improv exercises, we create moments that will bring out your inner musical star. We begin with musicals’ Golden Age -- the 1930s. Busby Berkeley directing and choreographing, Astaire & Rogers dancing, Judy Garland singing. We view movies through the decades, including ones like Showboat and Cabaret that in music and dance deal with subjects as difficult as racism and the rise of Nazi Germany. We end with La La Land which reintroduced the traditional jazz style of song numbers to a love story.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
All films are available from Netflix, Amazon, and YouTube streaming, or DVD.
Please view 42nd Street before the first class.

Marshall Marcovitz has had a lifelong love affair with the movies. He’s fascinated with the power of the movies to move us emotionally. He studied film with famed critic Roger Ebert at the University of Chicago.

Claude Samton is an award winning architect, artist and director of SoHo LoCo, an improvisational theatre company in NYC. He has a B.Architecture from Columbia University and studied at the Actors’ Studio. He has taught at Columbia, Cooper Union, The New School, NYU and coordinated courses in architecture, photography and creativity at the IRP. He has published seven books listed on Amazon.
**SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Week 1: *42nd Street*, 1932/33, Warner Brothers
Week 2: *Top Hat*, 1935, RKO
Week 3: *Show Boat*, 1936, Universal
Week 4: *Meet Me in St. Louis*, 1944, MGM
Week 5: *An American In Paris*, 1951, MGM
Week 6: *High Society*, 1956, MGM
Week 7: *West Side Story*, 1961, United Artists
Week 8: *Cabaret*, 1972, Allied Artists
Week 9: *Grease*, 1978, Paramount
Week 10: *Beauty and the Beast*, 1991, Disney
Week 11: *Chicago*, 2002, Miramax
Week 12: *Moulin Rouge*, 2001, 20th Century Fox
Week 13: (Optional) *La La Land*, 2016, Summit Entertainment
Looking at Modern Italian Society through Literature and Film

Coordinator: Bruce Solomon

All of us are touched by Italy—through opera, films of great beauty and realism, pizza and pasta. We learn about and discuss Italian society, cultural and political change and regional differences through five novels since unification in the 1860's and four films since the second world war.

Readings and Movies:
The House by the Medlar Tree by Giovanni Verga, translated by Raymond Rosenthal.
Christ Stopped at Eboli by Carlo Levi, translated by Frances Frenaye.
Family Lexicon by Natalia Ginzburg, translated by Jenny McPhee.
The Moon and the Bonfires by Cesare Pavese, translated by R. W. Flint.
Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio by Amara Lakhous, translated by Ann Goldstein.

(Each reading consists of 80 to 100 pages per week. All are available from Amazon from $5.50 to $14.93.)

La Terra Trema (1948), directed by Luchino Visconti
The Bicycle Thief (1949), directed by Vittorio de Sica
Rocco and His Brothers (1960), directed by Luchino Visconti
Il Posto (1961), directed by Ermanno Olmi
(Movies are available from Netflix or free internet services.)

Bruce Solomon lived in Italy for 25 years and returns each year, still fascinated by the "clash of civilizations" among regions and even neighboring towns. In no other European country do writers express these differences so well.

* * * * * * * * Syllabus - A Work in Progress * * * * * * * *

Weeks 1-3: The House by the Medlar Tree and La Terra Trema.
This is about a family of fishermen in Sicily about 1890, trying to
escape their need to borrow their boat and furnishings, which eat up most of their earnings.

1. What forces work against the family's ability to determine how it can become self-sufficient economically?
2. How does this struggle affect the family as a unit, and its ability to grow its younger members in turn to create marriage units with others?

Weeks 4-6: Christ Stopped at Eboli and The Bicycle Thief.
A doctor who resists the fascist government in the 1930s is exiled to a remote village in Calabria, and develops respect for the peasants.

1. What economic, political and geographical factors keep the peasants from escaping their difficult situations?
2. How do they maintain their dignity and sense of self-worth, in the eyes of the doctor who is forced to live among them?

Weeks 7-9: Family Lexicon and Rocco and His Brothers.
An autobiographical journal of a woman in a literary and politically active family during the fascist period until after the war.

1. How does the family retain its personal values during a time of autocratic governance?
2. How does the author herself go beyond the safety and security of her family during the fascist period?

A barely literate agricultural worker observes peasant families in the Piedmont region after the collapse of fascism.

1. How is the author affected by his visit to the United States in his attitudes to the life of the peasants after he returns to the region he grew up in?
2. How does the new political freedoms after the fall of fascism affect the lives of the peasants?

Week 12: Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio.
A mixed group of residents in a Rome apartment building, coming from different parts of Italy, and from north Africa, clash in their views of one another, during the first decade of the 21st century.

1. How does the move of peoples from north and south of Italy and from outside the country since the economic miracle affect their views of the "clash of civilizations"?

2. How do the characters in this novel contrast with the political and economic values of the earlier 20th century novels of Italian life we've read, and how does this show progress in the lives of Italians since 1890?
PILGRIMAGES: CULTURES IN MOTION

Coordinators: Frank Carden and Arlene Spiller

From Uluru (Ayers Rock, Australia) to Graceland, people of all cultures and religions have made sacred journeys to confirm their faith and their part in a larger identity. This study group explores the vast and varied cultural territory that pilgrimages have covered across the ages. We look at the vast phenomenon and experience of pilgrimage through the multiple lenses of history, religion, sociology, anthropology, art and literature. This is a repeat of the study group given in Spring 2017.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
All readings are contained in a coursepack or online. They include excerpts from the following:

Davidson, L. & Gitlitz, D., Pilgrimage: from the Ganges to Graceland

Clift, J. & Clift, W., The Archetype of Pilgrimage: Outer Action with Inner Meaning

Raguin, V. & Bangdel, D., (Eds) Pilgrimages and Faith


Coleman S. & Elsner, J., Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions

Guest speakers: a practicing Muslim will share his experiences of the Hajj and a practicing Buddhist will share her pilgrimage experiences

Frank Carden: Is a retired Clinical Psychologist and Psychoanalyst. He is interested in the interplay of religious belief and human psychology.

Arlene Spiller: In helping to promote interfaith dialogue while working for the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Arlene developed a deep interest in religious teachings, philosophy and practice.
SESSION 1: Introduction

READING: “Introduction” from Ganges to Graceland,
Chapter 3 from The Archetype of Pilgrimage

Discussion: Has anyone been on a pilgrimage? Where? What’s the difference between traveling as a tourist and as Pilgrim?

SESSION 2: Prehistoric pilgrimage sites as evidence of our primal and universal human need.

READING: Carl Jung’s theory of personality summarized by C. George Boeree, webspaced.ship.edu/cgboer/jung.html

Uluru, Stonehenge, and other prehistoric sites will be explored as pilgrimage destinations.

Discussion: What is the meaning of this history for us in the light of Jung?

SESSION 3: The Classical World: Sacred travel in the world of Greece and Rome

READING: Ch. 1 from Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions

Discussion of the reading about the Olympic Games and other well known, and not so well known, Greek and Roman rites viewed as pilgrimages.
WAGNER’S RING PART II: OPERA’S SUMMIT

Coordinator: James Smith

Richard Wagner’s Ring Cycle is one of the greatest works of art created in modern times, a powerful mythological probing of the signal dramas of the human condition. It combines intellectual heft, musical brilliance and timeless symbolism to achieve a level and extent of music drama unexcelled in operatic history. Love, death and the liberation we gain through sacrifice are the great themes the Ring illuminates. We explore how the musical features and motifs make the drama so effective. We cover the final two works in the cycle this term: Siegfried and Gotterdammerung. For all levels of musical experience, open to new enrollees and continuers from Fall 2017.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Order at https://www.bookdepository.com/RingTruth/9780141980720

James has coordinated a number of music study groups at the IRP. He is especially interested in how opera illuminates the larger culture.

********* Syllabus - A Work in Progress *********

Weeks 1 – 6: Siegfried. What is the origin of the story? What was Wagner’s attraction to it? Did Wagner see the story as an allegory for the class structure of “modern” society? Why did Wotan, the Zeus of our story, want to create a Non-God (Siegfried) who was free of Godly Obligations? What role do leitmotifs (musical themes associated with characters or objects) play in the cycle? How did Wagner revolutionize musical harmony?

Weeks 7 – 12: Gotterdammerung. Why did Brunnhilde change from a Goddess to a mortal? What kind of love do she and Siegfried share? What was the cause of the ultimate Twilight of the Gods? What do we do now?
In 1977, Irving Howe wrote that the literature of the Jewish-American immigrant experience was finished: “There just isn’t enough left of it.” Then came the exodus of Jews from the Soviet Union in the 1980s and ‘90s. Although they, too, fled discrimination and hoped for a better material life, both their experience and the literature they created differed from those of earlier immigrants. We examine the history of this group through the rich “hybrid memoirs” produced by writers such as Gary Shteyngart, Lara Vapnyar, Boris Fishman and David Bezmozgis.

Aileen Gitelson, a former social work administrator with experience in health care and senior services, chaired the Strategic Planning Committee and is a first-time coordinator interested in the Russian immigrant experience.

Irene Sax, a former food writer, has coordinated study groups on MFK Fisher, Food and Poetry, Food Memoirs and The Sonnet.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

* There are Jews in My House by Lara Vapnyar
* The Free World by David Bezmozgis
* A Replacement Life by Boris Fishman
* Little Failure by Gary Shteyngart
Reading:
“There are Jews in My House” and “A Question for Vera” from Lara Vapnyar’s There are Jews in My House.

Questions:
1. How did discrimination differ in the two stories?
2. How would you have behaved in Galina’s place?
3. Discuss your own/family immigrant experiences. Why did people you know (or you) leave their/your countries of origin? How have they/you experienced the adjustment to a new country?

WEEK 2: History  Brief overview of the history of Jews in Russia, the Soviet Revolution, its aftermath and its effect on the Jews 1919-1937.


Questions:
1. What was happening in Russia that made Jews think about immigration?
2. What roles did Jews have in the former Soviet Union (FSU)?

WEEK 3: The Journey in Fiction

Reading: The Free World by David Bezmozgis. A Russian family waits in Italy, deciding whether to go to Israel or Canada.

Questions: What are their reasons for leaving? How do these reasons differ among the generations and from those of earlier refugees?

WEEK 4: History The War Years 1937-1945 and after. How did Stalin and Khrushchev and anti-Semitism destroy Soviet Jewish culture?

Reading: The Free World II, The Soviet Jewish Americans by Annelise Orlick, pp. 31-41

Questions:
1. What happened that made it possible for the Jews to emigrate? How did it affect their role in the FSU?
2. Did the Soviet Jews think they had no choice about immigrating or did
they see this as a time to decide if they wanted to immigrate?

**Week 5:** The Journey in Fiction, continued.

**Reading:** *The Free World* III.

**Questions:** 1. What are some common threads of immigrant literature? 

2. How do these books differ from works by writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Amy Tan and Junot Diaz?

**Week 6: History:** The Second Exodus and the birth of the Refuseniks.


**Questions:** 1. How did the ordinary Jew’s life change, how did the lives of all FSU citizens change?

2. How did people decide which country to emigrate to? What was the most desirable country?

**Week 7:** In America.

**Reading:** Selections from *A Replacement Life* by Boris Fishman. Young Russian writer in NY invents Holocaust experiences to get reparations for his grandfather and other elderly Jews.

**Questions:**

1. Was Slava ethical? In what context?

2. What does the book say about varieties of suffering?

**Week 8: History** Problems of Absorption. What happened when they got here: new ethnic enclaves and conflict with American values and American Jews.

**Reading:** pp. 85-145 from *The Soviet Jewish Americans*, by Annelise Orlick.
Questions:
1. How did Soviet and Jewish values mesh?
2. What traditions did the immigrants bring with them?
3. What was the role of American Jewish agencies?

Week 9: In America.
Reading: A Replacement Life continued.
Questions:
1. What do we learn about generational conflicts on religion, materialism, language, ethics?
2. Dostoyevsky said, “We (Russian literature) all come from Gogol’s “Overcoat.” Is that true of Russian-American literature?

Reading: The Soviet Jewish Americans by Annelise Orlick, pp. 149-183.
Little Failure by Gary Shteyngart. Hilarious memories of a Russian youth in New York who keeps disappointing his parents.
Question:
1. Intergenerational angst: Why did we emigrate if you refuse to be a success?

Week 11: The Next Generation.
Reading: Little Failure, part 2.
Questions:
1. Is it a memoir?
2. Why do so many of our writers shine in “the disputed territory between truth and lies?”
**Week 12:** Wrap up as we finish *Little Failure* and ask where they are now. Interview and question period with a Soviet American about the personal journey from FSU to America.
CONTEMPORARY IRISH NOVELS

Coordinator: Ellen Kolegar

We read four contemporary novels that again demonstrate Irish authors' mastery of the English language. We begin with O'Brien's *Wild Decembers* set in rural Ireland, where feuds over land become entwined with romantic passions. Next is Toibin's *Nora Webster*, the story of a newly widowed middle-aged woman who must carve out a new identity and determine how much she owes to herself, her children and her husband's memory. Then on to McCann's *Transatlantic* combining three stories of journeys between North America and Ireland: an early flight, Frederick Douglass’s trip to Ireland and George Mitchell’s peace efforts in Northern Ireland. We conclude with Banville’s *Ancient Light*, in which an actor whose career has been resurrected recalls his teen-age love affair with the mother of his best friend.

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**
*Nora Webster* by Colm Toibin, (Scribner, 2015, ISBN 978-1-4391-7093-9)

Ellen Kolegar has coordinated many study groups focused on reading and discussing novels and short stories.

********* Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

**Week 1:** O'Brien, pp. 1-89  
**Week 2:** O'Brien, pp. 90-178  
**Week 3:** O'Brien, pp. 179-259  
**Week 4:** Toibin, pp. 1-97
Week 5: Toibin, pp. 98-188
Week 6: Toibin, pp. 189-286
Week 7: Toibin, pp. 287-373

Week 8: McCann, pp. 3-99
Week 9: McCann, pp. 100-224
Week 10: McCann, pp. 225-300

Week 11: Banville, pp. 3-102
Week 12: Banville, pp. 103-202
Week 13: Banville, pp. 203-288
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FAMILY SECRETS IN DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Coordinators:
Jan Adler, Patti Kaplan, Miriam Lawrence and Robert Sholiton

Many families have a secret. The nature of the secret may differ from family to family, although families often share underlying motivations such as shame, embarrassment or fear of consequences. Secrets may have been kept for generations or be as recent as the present day. Some family members respond to the uncovering of secrets with a sense of having been freed of a burden, while for others revelations come at a high price. We explore how twelve documentarians approach the subject, often in relation to his or her own family. In addition, we appreciate the wide variety of film techniques these creative artists employ to tell their stories. Participants view films at home prior to discussion in class. All are available on Netflix (DVD or streaming) unless otherwise noted.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Selected articles and essays to be emailed to participants. A subscription to Netflix that includes both DVDs and streaming is strongly suggested.

Jan Adler has coordinated a wide range of study groups. Patti Kaplan is an award-winning producer, and director of documentaries for HBO where she worked for many years. She holds a doctorate in Art History from CUNY. Patti currently teaches documentary at NYU. Miriam Lawrence has coordinated a variety of study groups on film, music and theater. Robert Sholiton has co-led several study groups on documentary film and narrative nonfiction.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

Week 1: 51 Birch Street, Doug Block, 2005, streams on Amazon Video for $3.99 and is available at public libraries.

Questions:
What do we know about the filmmaker’s initial inspiration to begin this journey investigating his own family? What are some possible motivations to reveal a personal story?

Week 2: *Capturing the Friedmans*, Andrew Jarecki, 2003
Questions:
What are the significant differences between Doug Block and Andrew Jarecki’s relationships to the subjects of their films? How does this affect the viewer’s experience? Do we come away from the film clear about what is "the truth?"

Week 3: *The Flat*, Arnon Goldfinger, 2011
Questions:
Who decided the secret must be kept and why? What is the impact, and on whom, of having the secret revealed?

Week 4: *Weiner*, Josh Kriegman & Elyse Steinberg, 2016
Questions:
Why did Anthony and Huma agree to giving unfettered access to the filmmakers? Why did they continue to honor their commitment?


Week 6: *Little White Lie*, Lacey Schwartz & James Adolphus, 2014

Week 7: *Daughter from Danang*, Gail Dolgin & Vicente Franco, 2002


Week 9: *Nobody’s Business*, Alan Berliner, 1996

Week 10: *Family Name*, Macky Alston, 1997

Week 12: *Stories We Tell*, Sarah Polley, 2012
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WRITING OUR STORY: WRITING MEMOIR

Coordinators: Philip M. Botwinick and Susan Smahl

A memoir is made from the most enduring, moving and informative experiences of one’s life. It may entertain, instruct, enlighten or caution its readers, and it reveals not only what happened but what its writer makes of what happened. It helps one to get to the bottom of things. Writings can be essays or chapters from a full-length memoir in progress. Participants read their eight-minute (maximum) pieces in class, followed by constructive critiques by the listeners. Does it engage the listeners? Confuse in parts? Have a coherent, consistent voice? Might more be explored? The writers are encouraged to ask the listeners about effectiveness, clarity, language, etc.

Philip Botwinick, a native New Yorker, has lived in three of five boroughs, but has biked from one end to the other (meaning Montauk). He’s a renaissance man in a time when being a specialist seems most important.

Susan Smahl, an educator, is secretly working on a memoir about growing up in the 1960s. Her first paid writing assignment was writing fake fan mail for a wine author who wanted to increase sales.
AMERICAN WOMEN: IDENTITY, CULTURE, COMMUNITY

Coordinators: Arlyne LeSchack and Colette Siegel

In this study group we read 27 pieces of writing by American women authors. Selections include poems, essays and short stories. Some examples are “What do Women Want?” by Kim Addonizio on Identity, “Freedom Fighter” by Perri Klass on Family, “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere” by ZZ Packer on Relationships, “Baby Gotta Eat” by Kima Jones on Work and “Recitatif” by Toni Morrison on Politics. Reading is less than 25 pages per week allowing us to focus deeply on the five themes: Identity, Family, Relationships, Work and Politics. We use the Great Books “Shared Inquiry” approach to text; each selection is followed by a series of questions including factual, interpretative and evaluative questions. This creates a text-centered discussion with full participation by all members of the study group.

Readings:

After 25 years as an Educator with the NYC DOE, Arlyne LeSchack joined the IRP in 2010. Arlyne has coordinated many study groups in literature and current events.
Colette Siegel became a CPA when few women were in the field. Discrimination was rife. She has been a member of the IRP for seven years and is excited about coordinating for the first time.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

All selections are from the above referenced text and each selection is followed by a series of discussion questions.

Week 1: Identity- “What do Women Want?” by Kim Addonizio
“At Odds” by Julia Serrano
“Rowing” by Anne Sexton

Week 2: Identity- “Ending Poems” by A.L. Morales & R. Morales
“Even the Queen” by Connie Willis
Week 3: Family- “I Go Back to 1937” by Sharon Olds
 “Freedom Fighter” by Perri Klass
 “Stories Don’t Have Endings” by Janice Gould
Week 4: Family- “My Father’s Chinese Wives” by S. T. Loh
 “The Box House and the Snow” by C. Henriquez
Week 5: Relationships- “A Boy My Sister Dated in High School” by
 Emily Mitchell
 “Apple Picking” by Laura Negrete
 “The Burning Heart” by Louise Gluck
 “Re-forming the Crystal” by Adrienne Rich
Week 6: Relationships- “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere” by ZZ Packer
Week 7: Work- “Mind-Body Story” by Nina Barrett
 “One Out of Twelve: Writers Who Are Women in Our Century” by Tillie Olsen
Week 8: Work- “Baby Gotta Eat,” Parts I-V by Kima Jones
 “Lowering Your Standards for Food Stamps” by Sheryl Luna
 “Color Blind or Color Brave” by Melody Hobson
Week 9: Work- “Reeling for the Empire” by Karen Russell
Week 10: Politics- “Recitatif” by Toni Morrison
Week 11: Politics- “When the World as We Knew it Ended” by
 Joy Harjo
 “Bad Feminist: Take One” by Roxane Gay
 “Woodchucks” by Maxine Kumin
Week 12: Politics- “Reading Lessons” by Edwidge Danticat
 “Ways of Conquest” by Denise Levertov
SOME ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS: GLOBAL WARMING AND OTHER SUSPECTS

Coordinator: Ted Dreyfus

Global Warming and Climate Change are not a single thing but, as Michael Bloomberg says in his book Climate of Hope, “…they can be seen as a series of discrete, manageable problems that can be attacked from all angles simultaneously. Each problem has a solution.” In this study group we explore a selection of the discrete problems and some of the solutions. We discuss whether the problems are manageable, alternative solutions, who is or should be responsible. Participants gain a broad understanding of the main issues, threats, risks and unknowns in the topics explored to be better equipped to interpret the news, debates and discussion about the environment. Given the topical nature of the themes, the reading material includes many current articles as well as excerpts from recent books; specific readings are added before and during the course as new material appears. NOTE: This is not a science course; it addresses environmental policy issues.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

All readings are provided online or in emails.

We read excerpts from the following books:


Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway [2011]. Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming,

Climate Wars: Policy, Politics, and the Environment, Foreign Affairs, by multiple authors.

We read newspaper and magazine articles and reports from government,
universities, businesses and non-profits.

We watch videos, including Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and video clips from YouTube and elsewhere.

**NOTE:** Given the current nature of these topics, new reading material may be added or substituted before the beginning of the study group. In the final syllabus, there will be a link for each reading, unless noted otherwise. There will also be optional readings on each topic for those who are interested. Readings not online will be provided by email to participants.

Ted Dreyfus is an American ex-pat who lived abroad for over 30 years, mostly in Latin America, where he was a banker, turn-around manager, rancher and tree farmer. He led the Global Forestry Project for the Clinton Foundation’s Climate Initiative.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

**Assignment for Week 1:** Watch Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth* before the first class meeting.

**Week 1**
**TOPIC:** The Basics - Causes & Sources of Climate Change
**READINGS:**
2. Economics of Global Climate Change, Tufts, p 1-14, 16, 31-34.
3. Key terms & concepts [to be sent to participants]
**VIDEO** to be shown in class: “Climate Change in 60 Seconds”
**QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING:**
1. What is the Greenhouse Effect? Carbon Cycle?
2. How do Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) cause Climate Change (CCH)?
3. What are the main sources of GHGs?

**Week 2**
**TOPIC:** Can Technology Solve It? The Wedges; The McKinsey Cost Curve
**READINGS:**
1. Smart Growth & CCH-Mitigation & Adaptation, EPA
2. Stabilization Wedges: Solving Climate Problem for Next 50 Years with Current Technologies

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING:
1. What are the “wedges?” How reasonable and realistic is the Wedges approach? Politically acceptable?
2. What is the McKinsey Cost Curve? Is it useful?

Week 3
TOPIC: Arctic Melt, Sea Level Rise & New Frontiers
READINGS:
1. Thawing Arctic an environmental catastrophe, Economist, Apr 2017

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING:
1. What does Arctic Melt mean for sea level, flooding & CCH around the world? Indigenous people? Wildlife?
2. Who gets to decide rules of the game in previously inaccessible areas? How?

Week 4
TOPIC: Coastal City Flooding--Rotterdam & NYC

Week 5
TOPIC: Energy for Electricity--Fossils v. Renewables, The Clean Power Plan

Week 6
TOPIC: Forests and Deforestation--Guyana Case Study

Week 7
TOPIC: National Security

Week 8
TOPIC: The Extreme Case

Week 9
TOPIC: Geo-engineering
Week 10
TOPIC: Carrots & Sticks

Week 11
TOPIC: International Agreements-Rio to Kyoto to Paris and Beyond…
VIDEO: *Game of Thrones*, Season 7, Episodes 2, 7

Week 12
TOPIC: Communicating Climate Change
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HISTORIOGRAPHY REDUX

Coordinators: Harold Berkowitz and Barbara Marwell,

All history is contemporary history, as historians in each generation reinterpret historical events in light of newly opened archives, changing values and new methods of historical analysis. In this study group, which follows the format of a popular 2016 Historiography group, ten IRP members and one outside expert consider the changes in the historical interpretations of important events from the 16th to the 20th Centuries. Topics include: the Mexican Conquest, Conservative Interpretations of the American and French Revolutions, Reconstruction, The Dreyfus Affair, USSR's Great Patriotic War, The Decision to Drop the Bomb, The Nuremberg Trials, Mao's Legacy, Historiography of Science and Historiography of the Double Helix. We examine why interpretations changed and how new analyses lead to changing perceptions of events. The presenters are listed in the syllabus.

Readings:
Coursepack and website. Readings for each session are listed in the syllabus.

Harold’s interest in Latin America was sparked as an undergraduate. For many years he has marveled at the labyrinth to the south. Harold has coordinated study groups on Forgiveness and History of Colonial Latin America.

Barbara has coordinated study groups on Political Islam and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as two sessions in the 2016 Historiography study group. She is co-organizer, with Harold, of this study group.

Individual sessions will be coordinated by ten IRP members, many of whom have coordinated numerous study groups and are well-known in our community, and one guest historian.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

WEEK 1: Maureen Sullivan -- Introduction to Historiography
Ever wonder why there is more than one book on the American Civil War? Historiography is the answer. Historiography is the history of the history of an event or issue -- not what happened, but how various historians interpreted the events differently. WHY? Archives opened, memories sharpened, opinions of ordinary people are considered, past prejudices corrected, new prejudices promoted or historians are simply reflecting the mores of the time.

**Readings:** (30 pp.)

**Questions:**
1. What historical event that you studied in school has been re-interpreted? Why do you think that happened? (Think of an example from World History, Economic Theory or Biography).
2. Should we judge previous histories using today's values?

**WEEK 2: Harold Berkowitz -- The Mexican Conquest**
The fall of the Aztec Empire and the island city Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) is a story of epic proportions. While the outlines of the story are familiar, the interpretation of the events and characters has changed, especially since the 1950s, due to a reevaluation by post-World War II scholars and popular writers and a fuller appreciation of Native American civilizations and how Native Americans wrote about and interpreted their own history.

**Readings:**
Excerpts from:

**Question:**
Did the conquest represent a radical change in indigenous history or were Spaniards and the colonial state incorporated into indigenous life?
WEEK 3: Eileen Sullivan -- The Origins of Right and Left: Burke and Paine on the American and French Revolutions
Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine were historians and historiographers, writing histories of the revolutions they experienced and analyzing the biases of one another’s work. They develop positions that will become characteristic of conservative and progressive views about political change, the purposes of society, the limits of government and the sources of peace, freedom and happiness.

Readings: (about 40 pp.)
Selections from Paine: On America (pamphlets: “Common Sense” 1776; “The American Crisis” 1783; On France: Rights of Man 1791.

Questions:
In what ways do these two historians exemplify conservative and progressive views about society, politics and political change? Have right and left perspectives changed much since their time?

WEEK 4: Lynn Brenner -- Reconstruction
Histories of the 12 years following the Civil War have changed radically in our lifetimes. No period in American history more dramatically illustrates how our selective memory of the past both reflects and influences current events.

Readings: (35-40 pp.)
Timeline of events
A glossary -- e.g., Freedman's Bureau, Scallawag, Carpetbagger, Copperhead
Community," pp 136-138, detailing black participation in the Reconstruction Constitutional Conventions and state legislatures; some contemporaneous quotes, Northern and Southern, white and black.

Jim Crow law literacy test from Louisiana. It has to be seen to be believed and illustrates how Southern states used the loophole in the 15th Amendment.

**Question:**
What factors contributed to the creation of the now-discredited "Dunning school" version of Reconstruction, and why was it accepted for so long?

**WEEK 5: James Gould -- The Dreyfus Affair**

The Dreyfus Affair nearly tore France apart as the Ancien Regime and the Republicans tried to shape history in their favor after defeat in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. Instead, positions taken in the Affair shaped France to the present day.

**Readings:**
The bare facts of the Affair and summary histories of: The Franco-Prussian War; National Vow for Sacre Coeur; French Catholic Church; Third Republic (Monarchists vs. Republicans); French Nobility and Jewish Community in France.

*Le Bordereau,* “The Memo” (translation), the key piece of evidence in the false accusation of Dreyfus for spying.

*Belle Epoque,* Raymond Rudorff, excerpt “The Dreyfus Period, Anti-Semitism.”

Edouard Drumont’s *La Libre Parole* (translation).

Emile Zola’s "J’Accuse...!" annotated translation by Shelley Temchin and Jean-Max Guieu (Georgetown University, 2001).

**Question:**
How does the Affair illustrate the power of individuals who are not Great Men to change the course of history?
WEEK 6: Linda Gottlieb and Esther Phillips -- Russia and the “Great Patriotic War"
Russia’s role in WWII has been continuously rewritten according to who is in power, with profound effects on the national psyche and on world politics.

Readings: (30 pp.)
"History, Memory and National Identity: Understanding the Politics of History and Memory Wars in Post-Soviet Lands" by Igor Torbakov.

Question:
Russia’s historians avoided confronting the darker sides of its history. Does confronting historical guilt serve a purpose?

WEEK 7: James McClellan, Guest Historian -- The Historiography of Science
This session examines the literature surrounding accounts of science and its history, particularly over the last half century, and further developments associated with the “literary turn” in science studies.

Readings:
Wikipedia, “Historiography of Science.”

Questions:
If science supposedly discovers true facts about nature, how can accounts of science’s history be anything other than narratives of progress?
What is the sociology of knowledge and how can it be that “facts” are social products?

WEEK 8: Lorne Taichman -- Historiography of the Double Helix
The discovery of the structure of DNA is chronicled by James Watson in his personal account, The Double Helix. In that account he belittles Rosalind Franklin and marginalizes her contribution. In this
session we discuss how the history of that discovery got written and the response to Watson's distorted account.

Readings:

Selections from The Double Helix by James D. Watson and Rosalind Franklin and DNA by Anne Sayre.

Question:
Would Rosalind Franklin suffer the same fate if that research were done today?

WEEK 9: Jonathan Gaines -- The Nuremberg Trials
We consider the motives for the Nuremberg trials, perspectives on the legitimacy of the trials and what they accomplished, and evolution of the Nuremberg precedent in the concept of transitional justice and adjudication of crimes against humanity.

Readings: (42 pp.)
Excerpts from “Transitional Justice in Germany After 1945,” David Cohen (War Crimes Center, U.C. Berkeley)

Question:
What were the purposes of the trials and were they achieved?

WEEKS 10 and 11: Joe Zuckerman -- The Decision to Drop the Bomb
Dropping the bomb saved hundreds of thousands of American lives that would have been lost in the invasion of Japan. Save the Emperor, stick it to Stalin, FDR is to blame, why the rush? The debate marches on.

Readings:
Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to use the Bomb" (Harpers Magazine, February 1947).
Rufus E. Miles, Jr., "Hiroshima The Strange Myth of Half A Million American Lives Saved" (International Security, Fall 1985)

**Question:**

Why was the explanation that "the Bomb saved hundreds of thousands of American lives" accepted without challenge for decades? How valid were the numbers?

**WEEK 12: Sophie Balcoff -- Mao’s Legacy: How Will the World Remember Him?**

Some Americans saw Mao’s vision as an inspiring alternative to a society mired in the Vietnam War. Others (including some Chinese) saw him as self-aggrandizing, detached, and, ultimately, highly destructive to the nation he helped to mold.

**Readings:** (Less than 50 pp.)

Excerpts from Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*.


Excerpt from Roderick MacFarquhar, *Mao’s Last Revolution*.

**Question:**

What evidence do scholars present in support of their claims about Mao? How convincing is the evidence?

**WEEK 13: Maureen Sullivan and Participants --**

Summing Up: What have we learned and how do these threads connect?
THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

Coordinators: Lesley Herrmann and Ruth Mackaman

The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky’s final masterpiece, is a gripping family saga of three brothers and their licentious father. The frenetic plot, set in the provinces in mid-19th century Russia, involves drunkenness, murder, inheritance, love triangles and courtroom drama. It is also a great philosophical inquiry into the nature of good and evil. In this study group we do a close reading of selected passages in the novel. Dostoevsky has conveniently divided it into twelve books; we read a book each week and discuss themes (e.g., If God is all-powerful, knowing and loving, then why does he allow evil to exist? What is the role of the narrator? Can you escape your family destiny?). We study life, culture and issues of the day in 19th century Russia. We read the Pevear and Volokhonsky translation, but we use other translations from time to time for comparison.

Readings:


Lesley Herrmann has a graduate degree in Russian literature and loves 19th century Russian novels.

Ruth Mackaman is interested in human nature and family dynamics and enjoys a good pot-boiler. We look forward to many lively discussions in the study group.
**Syllabus - A Work in Progress**

**Week 1: Book One - "A Nice Little Family" (pp 7-33)**

Introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov* and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Brief overview of life, culture and issues of the day in 19th century Russia and Russian names and patronyms.

Meet the “nice little family”: The debauched father, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov; sensual first born Dmitri Fyodorovich (Mitya); intellectual second born Ivan Fyodorovich (Vanya); devout and gentle third born Alexei Fyodorovich (Alyosha).

*Questions:*

Is there anything “nice” about the Karamazovs?

Who is the narrator? Is this important? Can he/she be trusted?

How important is the translation?

Alyosha says there are no hooks in heaven. What is the meaning of this?

**Week 2: Book Two - "An Inappropriate Gathering" (pp 34-91)**

The family meets in the monastery with the elder Zosima to resolve a dispute between Fyodor Pavlovich and his son Mitya. Fyodor Pavlovich is crude and vulgar. Mitya is late. Alyosha is mortified. Ivan discusses his article on ecclesiastical courts. Zosima sounds some of Dostoevsky’s great recurring themes. The meeting turns into a donnybrook.

*Questions:*

What is the dispute between Fyodor Pavlovich and Mitya?

What themes does Zosima introduce?

Why does Zosima kneel before Mitya?

Ivan, the doubter, says that there should be no separation of church and state and the church should be all-powerful. Why? Zosima, the believer, agrees with him, but for different reasons. What is really going on?
Week 3: Book Three - "Sensualists" (pp 92-160)

This book describes the relationships among the main characters, often from Alyosha’s point of view. There are declarations of love and hate. Mitya is engaged to Katerina Ivanovna (Katya) but loves Grushenka. Fyodor Pavlovich lusts after Grushenka. Ivan loves Katya but she is engaged to Mitya. Alyosha receives a declaration of love and hurries back to the dying Zosima. We meet Fyodor Pavlovich’s illegitimate son Smerdyakov.

Questions:

Where is the narrator?

How is the rivalry between Fyodor Pavlovich and Mitya shown?

Why does Katya invite Grushenka to her house? What are the dynamics between Katya and Grushenka and why is this psychologically significant?

Why did Zosima send Alyosha out into the world? What does Alyosha bring to the lives of those around him?

Why does Mitya loathe himself?

How does Smerdyakov fit into the family?
501
ROCK ‘N’ ROLL: ROOTS TO RAP

Coordinators: Sheila O’Connell and Ron Russo

We study the evolution of rock music, from its roots in Gospel, Rhythm and Blues, and Country, to the development of Rap as a rock format. Rock ‘n’ Roll turned a loud, sexy, urban black and country music from regional independent radio stations into music in the cars, homes, jukeboxes and lives of suburban white America, music that spoke to and for a counterculture. From its birth in the ’50s to the ‘60s when it came of age, to the diversity of the ‘70s down to today, we watch, listen to and discuss this music which influenced life styles, fashion, language and attitudes. Rock ‘n’ Roll started out talking about pretty girls and hot cars and wound up talking about everything.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
All readings are online. The main emphasis of the study group is on listening to the music via YouTube and film clips of performers, and noting the changes in Rock over the decades.

Sheila O’Connell has been a member of the IRP for 12 years, and has coordinated many study groups.

Ron Russo has been an IRP member for 11 years, has coordinated a number of study groups and gives the New Coordinator Skills workshop twice a year.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********


Read: “The 50s: A Decade of Music that Changed the World”
**Week 3:** Changes begin: “In-between” music, sanitized. Development of Motown. View and listen to The Supremes, The Temptations, The Four Tops.

**Week 4:** British invasion & American groups of the late ’60s. Listen to Jimi Hendrix; also Days of Future Passed, Moody Blues (1967) with London Philharmonic. (Concept album - - tells a story start to end) Gay men behind the scenes: read https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/style/the-gay-architects-of-classic-rock.html?emc=eta1

**Week 5:** Beatles and the Rolling Stones: Entire session dedicated to their music and history. With multiple film clips of performances.

**Week 6:** Folk music and its development. How is it different? The significance of Bob Dylan. We listen to Peter, Paul and Mary, Simon & Garfunkel, the Mamas and Papas, to the Doors, the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield. The Summer of Love, Woodstock…and Altamont.

**Week 7:** Late ’60s and ’70s: an end. Evolution of Rock. Counter culture - - Jefferson Airplane, Cream, Grateful Dead, Led Zep, Crosby, Stills and Nash. The Eagles, Creedence Clearwater Revival. Pink Floyd and Queen. Drugs and death.

**Week 8:** Progressive Rock / Punk and New Wave – developed as a reaction to older Rock and/or disco? Listen to The Ramones, Elvis Costello, The Psychedelic Furs. Read New Yorker article on Prog Rock http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/19/the-persistence-of-prog-rock

**Week 9:** 1980s: “Big” sound, dance music. Much less rebellious but some social commentary. Question: why the shift from political to “light” music? Listen to Michael Jackson – Thriller https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOnqjkJTMaA Madonna – Material Girl https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3wYljl8Wcl&list=RDf3wYljl8Wcl
Culture Club – Do You Really Wanna Hurt Me?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nXGPZaTKik
Frankie Goes to Hollywood – Relax
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWsUzVgHZ8k

**Week 10:** Women in Rock: Aretha, Grace Slick, Marianne Faithfull, Janis, Dusty Springfield, Stevie Nicks - - then, of course, Madonna, Beyoncé and Lady Gaga

**Week 11:** Rap: Start with Blondie & Curtis Blow.
Emphasize social commentary.
View film *Eight Mile*?
Emphasize that originally it was just a new musical format, quickly became political, angry.
Blondie – *Rapture*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHCdS7O248g
Run DMC – Aerosmith – *Walk This Way*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B_UYYPb-Gk
Kurtis Blow – The Breaks
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZDUEiIS5M4

**Week 12:** Wrap-up: Participants bring in examples of current music that children/grandchildren listen to, and report on their reactions to this music.
History is usually presented in the narrow focus of a kingdom, an empire, an era. But is there an overall structure that can organize and analyze all 21 civilizations to understand how they arose from primitive societies? Why some grow and thrive and others freeze or wither? How some survive successive blows and others break down and disintegrate? What roles government and religions play in their survival? Arnold Toynbee answered these questions and more in his *A Study of History*, which has been praised as brilliant and vilified as oversimplistic for positing patterns in history. We study Toynbee and his critics and debate whether it is possible to forecast the future from the past, or at least make better decisions by considering history. This study group is a repeat of Fall 2016.

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**
*A Study of History* by Arnold J. Toynbee
Any publisher or printing will do, so long as it is the two volume abridgment by D.C. Somervell. Used copies of the set cost $20 (more or less), $9.95 for each volume on Kindle.

Coursepack: ~110 pages, ~$10-15

**James Gould** is a past patent litigator, present day motorcyclist, world traveler, devourer of NYC culture and books, learning-to-be writer

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

**Week 1: Does History have Patterns?**

**Coursepack:**
“Oswald Spengler: An Introduction to His Life and Ideas”
“The Disturbing Freshness of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*”
“Is History a Guide to the Future?” from Barbara Tuchman’s *Practicing History The Pattern of the Past*
What is the purpose of studying history?
Is each civilization unique or can they be put in categories as Toynbee did?
Do civilizations follow patterns over their lives?
Can history forecast the future or at least help us make better decisions?

Week 2: The Geneses of Civilizations
Coursepack:
The Barabaig Tribe
Icelandic Sagas – Migrations

What distinguishes a civilization from a primitive society, and which makes people happier?
How and why do civilizations start?
Is there a “sweet spot” of challenges that makes a civilization thrive?
What part did the challenge of Islam play in the genesis of Western civilization?

Week 3: The Growths of Civilizations
Coursepack:
The Pattern of the Past

Why do some civilizations grow and others freeze or fossilize?
Does a civilization grow faster in response to pressure and blows?
When does a barbarian society have an advantage over a civilization?
What part does creativity play in the growth of a civilization?

Week 4: The Breakdown of Civilizations
Coursepack:
The Pattern of the Past
Collapse
Greenland

Why do civilizations break down?
Is internal decay or external pressure more likely to cause a civilization to break down?
Do moral factors play a part in breakdown of a civilization?
Is militarism suicidal to a civilization?

Week 5: The Disintegrations of Civilizations


Coursepack:
Oswald Spengler: An Introduction to His Life and Ideas – See Coursepack for Week 1
“The Disturbing Freshness of Gibbon’s Decline and Fall” – See Coursepack for Week 1 (*The Atlantic*, March 1997)
*The Pattern of the Past* on disintegration
“After the Islamic State” on the disintegration of Arab states

What is the difference between breakdown and disintegration of a civilization?
Do civilizations disintegrate because of environmental disaster, invasion, economics, moral decay or something else?
When civilizations disintegrate, do they leave residues, set up the next civilization or disappear?
When can a savior with a book or a sword reverse disintegration?

Week 6: Universal States


Coursepack:
“Is the EU a Universal State?”
*The Art of War*, Sun Tsu
*Agricola*, Tacitus

Are there such things as universal states?
Was the Roman Empire a universal state?
Was the Ottoman Empire a universal state?
Must a universal state have a standing army, and, if so, why?
Week 7: Role of Religion in the Life of a Civilization


Coursepack:
“The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster”
*Natural History*, David Hume
“Xi Acts, and China’s Tough Rules on Religion Get Even Tougher”
“China’s Other Muslims”
*Germania*, Tacitus

What role does religion play in a civilization?  
Do churches sustain civilizations (or political leaders) or do civilizations sustain churches?  
How would Western civilization have differed without the Catholic Church in the Dark Ages?  
Does separation of state and religion strengthen or weaken a civilization compared to a theocracy?

Week 8: Heroic Ages.

*A Study of History*, Vol. II, Chapter VIII Heroic Ages, pp. 120-143 (entire chapter)

Coursepack:
*Iliad*
*Beowulf’s Victory*
*The Icelandic Sagas*
*The Kalevala – A Brother’s Revenge*
“Jabberwocky”
“What’s so Epic about a National Epic?” on the origin of Finland’s Kalevala
“The Evolution of Myths” from Scientific American

What are the qualities of a heroic age?  
Did Greece have a Heroic Age?  
Did the Scandinavians have a Heroic Age?  
Toynbee says Heroic Ages accumulate pressure until a cataclysm.  
Does that always happen?

Week 9: Contacts between Civilizations in Space.

**Coursepack:**

*Islam, Religion, History and Civilization*

*What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam And Modernity In The Middle East*

What effect does contact between equal and between unequal civilizations have upon their development?

What role did the Silk Road play in the diffusion of civilizations’ technology and culture?

Were the Crusades a net positive or negative in the growth of Western civilization?

What are the responses of Islam to defeat by the West and what are their prospects for success?

**Week 10: Contacts between Civilizations in Time – A Survey of Renaissances.**

*A Study of History*, Vol. II, Chapter X Contacts...in Time, pp. 241-60 (entire chapter)

**Coursepack:**

*The Italian Renaissance*

*Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy*

“Knock on Wood” (Luther and Lucas Cranach)

What impact did ancient writing and art have on the Italian Renaissance?

Why did modern Western civilization derive from Greco – Roman civilizations?

Can art, literature and law from the past shape a civilization?

Why do civilizations create origin myths?

**Week 11: Law and Freedom in History.**


**Coursepack:**

*The Art of War*

Madison Federalist Papers #23

*Icelandic Sagas*

*The Austrians* on marriage as an alternative to war

“Men of War” on Jihadists

“Return to Babel” on Esperanto
“Bhutan’s First Law School Borrows from Buddhist Values”

How accurate was Madison in the Federalist Papers when he said, “But what is government but the greatest reflection of human nature?”

What part does human nature, human psychology, play in the fate of a civilization?

Is a codified body of law that survives a ruler necessary for a civilization over the long term?

What form of government has historically been the most robust?

Week 12: The Prospects of Western Civilization.

A Study of History, Chapter XII Prospects & Chapter XII Conclusion, pp. 302-54

Coursepack:
The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich
“The Disturbing Freshness of Gibbon’s Decline and Fall” - See Coursepack for Week 1

“Why Gloom Trumps Glad”

Practicing History by Barbara Tuchman – See Coursepack for Week 1

The Art of War on Leadership Qualities

“Failure of Binary Thinking”

“He’s Back: Karl Marx, Yesterday and Today”

“Nihil Sine Xi” on China trying to control history

“Inside The (Russian) Bear”

“Exit Wounds” on effect of Brexit

“Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index”

“The Roots of Science Denial”

Does evolution’s teaching that adapting to the changing world is the best means of survival apply to nations like the United States?

What does history teach us about how to achieve reasonable harmony in a civilization so it does not tear itself apart?

Is Gross National Product or Gross National Happiness more important to survival of a civilization?

What does the present denial of science portend about the future of Western Civilization?
SELF-DECEPTION IN MODERN DRAMA

Coordinators: Burt Freeman and Sandra Freeman

Understanding how and why we lie to ourselves and how these lies influence our behavior can lead us to a better understanding of the role of self-deception in human life. We focus on close analyses of Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck*, O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh* and Miller’s *All My Sons* which all deal with the common theme—self-deception (an Ibsen character calls it the *life lie*). Is it needed to cope with life? We also supplement the play analyses with selections from the literature on self-deception, primarily from Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, Mike W. Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, and the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
O’Neill, *The Iceman Cometh* -- prefer Yale University Press (intro. by Harold Bloom)
Miller, *All My Sons* -- prefer Penguin Classics

A coursepack containing articles, essays and excerpts from psychological and philosophical sources —approx. $20
(25-30 pp of reading in the weeks when we’re not reading the plays)

Burt, a retired attorney and an IRP member for two decades has coordinated about five study groups including one on *The Life Lie in Modern Drama* and has a deep interest in dramatic literature.
Dr. Freeman spent most of her professional life in the Speech and Theater Department of LIU, teaching courses from speech development to speech pathologies. An unsuccessful actor, she has a life-long interest in the theater and the art of acting.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

Week 1: Introductory discussion of various aspects of self-deception.
Week 2: Discussion of *The Wild Duck* as a pioneering piece of dramatic literature of its self-deceiving character(s).
Week 3: Continuation of session two.
Week 4: Discussion of one aspect of self-deception, probably its help in coping with life.
Week 5: Discussion of *All My Sons*.
Week 6: Continuation of Session five.
Week 7: Discussion of another aspect of self-deception, possibly self-deception as it relates to deception of others.
Weeks 8, 9 and 10: Discussion of *The Iceman Cometh*.
Week 11: Discussion of another aspect of self-deception such as evading duties and responsibilities.
Week 12: Wrap-up.
This century has seen a flowering of talent from the Indian Subcontinent. Born in the ‘60s and ‘70s, these writers have examined the society of their birth (or parentage) and contrasted it with British or American society, in a way that’s both critical and loving. Their novels and stories are richly ambivalent, sometimes spare, sometimes poetic. Each has its humor, its tragedy and its charm. We explore and discuss five books that give a flavor of this “culture clash” by authors Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai, Monica Ali and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Sophie Balcoff was a high school English and social studies teacher. She joined the IRP on retiring in 2012. This study group will be the tenth she has coordinated (or co-coordinated.)

Readings:
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*
Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*
Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*
Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

Week 1
How does the book give us the flavor of Kerala, India?
How are the lives of the family members intertwined?

Week 2
*The God of Small Things*, chapters 8 – 21
How is the tragic outcome foreshadowed throughout these chapters?
How does the denouement critique Indian society?
Week 3
Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*, first half
How does the author balance political satire with the need to tell a good story?
What are some of the “culture clashes” set forth in the book?

Week 4
*The White Tiger*, second half
Is the main character justified in his crime?

Weeks 5 and 6:
Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*

Weeks 7, 8 and 9:
Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*

Weeks 10, 11 and 12:
Each week we read two stories from Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*
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WRITING WORKSHOP

**Coordinators:**
Eileen Brener, Lorna Scott Porter, Charles Troob and Elaine Weisburg

The main draw of this workshop is the lively sense that we are 'all in this writing business together.' Everyone, including coordinators, writes a short piece each week. A constructive class discussion of each submission provides the motivation to express our thoughts and to improve technique, style and language. Weekly assignments provide jumping-off places. Samples of writing by distinguished authors are often provided.

After years of legal writing, **Eileen Brener** is delighted to be part of this group of writers whose wide range of topics and perspectives encourage and inspire her. **Lorna Scott Porter** once again cherishes the opportunity to write weekly and discuss myriad methods of expression with others. This study group has helped **Charles Troob** unleash his inner writer. He hopes that new members will join and flourish. In more than four decades as a magazine editor **Elaine Weisburg** had the pleasure of working with other writers. She is grateful that she can continue this activity at the IRP.

******** Syllabus  - A Work In Progress ********

The first session includes an in-class exercise. For each subsequent session there will be a writing assignment of 200-300 words, to be completed and emailed to the study group two days prior to the next session. At that session, each participant’s writing will be discussed.

Each exercise is given by one coordinator in turn, who leads the discussion of that exercise the following week. The other coordinators complete the assignment along with the rest of the class and participate in the discussion.

Weeks 1-4
The writing assignments and discussion focus on how to express experiences, thoughts and perceptions in a way that will interest others.

Weeks 5-8
Each week introduces a different genre. Possible examples of writing assignments are a description, a fictional narrative, a non-fiction piece and a dialogue.

Weeks 9-12
Assignments focus on style and structure, taking into account the preferences of study group participants.
EUGENICS: FROM NORDIC NATION TO MADE IN AMERICA

Coordinators: Susan Forlenza and Ron Forlenza

During the early twentieth century, the Progressive Era was known for the Eugenics movement. Begun with the lofty goal of bettering humanity by scientific means of the times, it became a justification for repressive and racist social policies in the USA. Discredited by modern science after WWII, it faded from public awareness and policy. The current political era has seen a resurgence in the type of racist thinking fostered during the eugenic era. Our study group traces the eugenics movement in the USA from its beginnings through WWII, when it was scientifically disproven, only to be resurrected in today’s white nationalism. This study group was previously offered in 2012.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
War Against the Weak by Edwin Black (approximately 450 pages of text.)
There will be a course pack.
There will be approximately 50 pages of reading per class.

Susan and Ron co-coordinated the previous eugenics study group and are happy to offer it again. They also coordinated an animated film study group this past fall.

******* Syllabus - a Work in Progress *******

Week 1: Eugenics is Born: Darwin to Dalton
Week 2: Raceology
Week 3: Eugenics as Science
603
NEUROBIOLOGY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Coordinator: James Smith

Biology is essential to the understanding of such behaviors as aggression, competition, cooperation and empathy, but we cannot rely on biology alone. And it actually makes no sense to distinguish between aspects of human behavior that are “biological” and those that would be described as, say, “psychological” or “cultural” as they are utterly intertwined. Understanding the biology is obviously important, but unfortunately this subject is hellishly complicated, involving brain chemistry, hormones, sensory cues, prenatal environment, early experience, genes, both biological and cultural evolution and ecological pressures. Guided by a masterful text, we integrate these perspectives, transcend categorical thinking and elevate our understanding.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

James directed a non-profit educational institution for many years, and has coordinated many courses on Neuroscience and Culture at the IRP.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

Week 1: Approach to Understanding Behavior: Integrating Biology and Culture
Week 2: Immediate Biological Causes of behaviors
Week 3: The 5 minutes that precede an action
Week 4: The Hours and Days Before
Week 5: Days to months before
Week 6: Adolescence: Or, Dude, Where’s my frontal cortex
Week 7: Back to the crib, back to the womb
Week 8: Centuries to Millennia before
Week 9: The Evolution of Behavior
Week 10: Us versus Them
Week 11: How we make Moral Judgments
Week 12: War and Peace

For first week, read Pages 1 - 40
GEMS OF FRENCH CINEMA: VINTAGE AND MODERN

Coordinators: Anne-Marie Bourbon, Robert Gerace and Christine Luneau-Lipton

Every film lover is familiar with the French Nouvelle Vague, which launched French cinema into a new age and brought about major changes in global cinema. But what came before? What characterized French cinema before the New Wave and what drove the New Wave directors to demand changes in French cinema? A previous study group focused on Nouvelle Vague films. In this study group we sample classic films from before the changes wrought by the New Wave; then we sample films from the post-New Wave modern period to examine the long-term effects of the innovations. Emphasis is given to discussion of characters, themes and the director’s cinematic style within the context of the French culture of the time. French history, culture and politics provide background for the analysis of the films.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
There is no coursepack.
However, each week a brief biography of each director, along with filmography, major awards and one review of each film is emailed in advance and discussed in class.
Subscription to Netflix is required along with access to the Web and the Amazon Web film rental service for the rare case when the film is not available on Netflix.

Anne-Marie, a retired French Professor, has enjoyed all these movies and wants to deepen the group’s appreciation by sharing her analysis of them with the class. Anne-Marie has previously co-coordinated a study group, “The French New Wave and Beyond.”

Robert has co-coordinated study groups on Italian and Czech New Wave Cinemas, Joseph Conrad and Greenwich Village Protest Writers. He is currently co-coordinating a study group on Muslim films.

Christine taught French at the New School from 1969 until 2014 and was department coordinator. She also had a small part in the remake of the 1995 Sydney Pollack’s film Sabrina, playing a flight attendant in a scene with Harrison Ford. Christine is currently coordinating a study group on French songs.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********
Week 1:  *A Trip to the Moon* (*Voyage dans la Lune*), Georges Méliès, 1902
Week 3:  *Jean de Florette*, Claude Berri, 1986
Week 4:  *Manon of the Spring* (*Manon des Sources*), Claude Berri, 1986
Week 5:  *One Deadly Summer* (*L’été meurtrier*), Jean Becker, 1984
Week 7:  *Goodbye Children* (*Au revoir les enfants*), Louis Malle, 1987
Week 8:  *Indochine*, Régis Wargnier, 1992
Week 9:  *The Pianist* (*Le pianist*), Roman Polanski, 1992
Week 10:  *Hidden* (*Caché*), Michael Haneke, 2005
Week 11:  *Tell No One* (*Ne le dis à personne*), Guillaume Canet, 2006
Week 12:  *Rust and Bone* (*De rouille et d’os*), Jacques Audiard, 2012

**Assignment for First Session:**
Participants should review the outline and syllabus, and read articles and film reviews to be sent in advance via email.
The expanded syllabus will be sent in early January, 2018.
For the first session view *A Trip to the Moon* on YouTube.

Secondly, focus on the theme question for our first session and remaining classes:
"What drove the French New Wave directors to demand changes from the old cinema formulas?"

For the second session view the film *La Grande Illusion* and read the biography of Jean Renoir on the Web at:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Renoir
AGING -- FROM FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH TO TELOMERES

**Coordinators:** Robert Braff and John Gillespie

Aging, like the weather, is generally assumed to be inevitable and beyond human intervention. But our understanding of its origins, dynamics and evolution is undergoing fascinating and rapid development. What is aging? How does it differ from senescence? Can we influence it? We explore aging from diverse perspectives: historical, biological, genetic, cognitive, cultural and lifestyle. We visit concepts such as afterlife, reincarnation, rejuvenation, as well as the exciting recent developments in epigenetics and genetic editing. Visions of aging from literature and cinema are reviewed. We consider the significant ethical and legal implications of human intervention in aging.

**READINGS AND OTHER MATERIALS/ONLINE SERVICES:**
Weekly emails list readings and Internet sites to visit. Readings can also be found on the site for the study group. Some films may be suggested for pre-class viewing; they will be available at sources such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon or the NYPL. Internet access is required.

**Bob Braff**, a cardiologist, has co-coordinated study groups on The History of Science, Consciousness and Free Will and A Broken Heart.

**John Gillespie**, an astrophysicist, has coordinated many study groups, including Literature and Science, Exploring The Universe and Art and Physics.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

**Week 1. Introduction to Aging**
Definition of aging; overview. Is it a disease? Aging vs. senescence. What defines life?
**Week 2. Life After Death**
The quest for immortality: afterlife, reincarnation, time’s arrow.

**Week 3. Aging in an Evolutionary Context**
History, theories: Lamarck, Darwin, Mutations, selective breeding, eugenics.

**Week 4. Aging: Culture, Religion, Ethnicity**
Perceptions of aging: contrasts and similarities.

**Weeks 5 & 6. Aging in Literature, Cinema, Art**
Time’s arrow, chronology. Examples: *Benjamin Button*, *The Time Machine*, *Terminator I*, *To the Lighthouse*.

**Week 7. Why do We Age?**
Physiology and control of aging.

**Week 8. Genetics, Epigenetics, Aging**
Glossary. Genetic engineering & gene editing (CRISPR).

**Week 9. Aging, Cognition, and... oh, yeah. Memory**
How we think. Pathologies.

**Week 10. Aging and Lifestyle**
Eating, drinking, sleeping, exercise. Role of environment.

**Week 11. The Future of Aging**
Can aging be slowed or reversed? Chronological vs. biological age. Rejuvenation. Can we genetically engineer our way out of aging? Harmonizing aging body and aging mind.

**Week 12. Ethics of Aging Intervention; Future of Aging**
Summary.
702
LITERATURE OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Coordinator: Carol Schoen

Although the decade 1929-1939 was one of the bleakest in American history, it also produced some of the most significant additions to our literary history. Even adversity makes its contribution to society! We begin with a look at the historical background of the period. Then we read and discuss selected short stories and novels by iconic authors from the period including: Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Nathaniel West.

Readings:
Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*
John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*
Nathaniel West, *The Day of the Locust*

Additional readings are in a coursepack.

Carol taught at Lehman College CUNY until she retired. She has coordinated many study groups at the IRP.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress********

Week 1: Timeline of main events 1929-1939; “Panic” from *The Great Crash 1929* by John Kenneth Galbraith.

Weeks 2/3: Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*.

Week 4: “Bright and Morning Star” from Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom’s Children*.

Week 5: Selections from Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Week 6: Selections from James Farrell, *Studs Lonigan*.

Week 7: Selected F. Scott Fitzgerald short stories from the period.
Weeks 8/9/10: John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*.

From 1990 to 2007 Europe was on an upswing. The eastern bloc disappeared. Germany was reunited. The EU grew to 20 countries; a strong euro and vibrant economies with political stability were common. But after the panic and recession of 2008, Europe’s apparent serenity unraveled. High unemployment, deficits, bond defaults, increasing wealth inequality all showed the precarious nature of Europe’s ascendency. Now right wing groups, Brexit, demographic challenges worsened by refugee flows and slow economic growth sketch a Europe in distress.

This study group focuses on social, political, economic and cultural issues in Europe now, against the background of the last 20 years. We use articles, texts and current social data to help us understand the risks and promises of Europe in 2017.

**Reading and other Materials:**
This short essay provides background on Europe after WWII and will be used during the first three sessions.
There are reading assignments for each session from essays, newspaper articles (*NY Times, The Guardian, London Times*, e.g.) and op-eds and magazine and journal articles from sources like the Brookings Institute, *The Economist, Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. Because of the immediacy of most topics the reading is selected and sent by email or hyperlink to study group members one week before each session date. Total reading for each week is expected to be 25-30 pages.

**Michael Hill** is a retired marketing executive who taught European History – a while ago—and has a PhD in 19th century European History. He has coordinated or co-coordinated four study groups, on European Socialism, Income Inequality, Secularism and Social Collapse.
1. Europe at the new century.
   Judt, Chapter 1
   A. The idea of Europe. Why did it happen?
   B. How do West and East and North/South splits affect Europe now?
   C. EU Growth and the Euro. Who joined when and why?

2. Europe and the panic.
   Judt, Chapter 2
   A. A US contagion, but why did it affect Europe more than America?
   B. Measuring the Recession?
   C. The austerity formula, has it worked?

3. Political Crisis. England, France and Germany–can the center hold?
   Judt, Chapter 3 and additional readings via email
   A. Tories, Labor and Ukip, who’s next?
   B. Sarkozy, Hollande and Macron.
   C. Merkel-land and grand coalitions. How the CDU works?

   Selected readings via email
   A. The colonies started it.
   B. East to west and the London magnet.
   C. Refugees change everything.

5. Political Crisis--the ultra right and an aggressive left.
   Selected readings via email
   A. Would they be fascists?
   B. Authority rules the East
   C. What does “leftist” mean now?

6. Coming Apart: from Grexit to Brexit and beyond.
   Selected readings via email
   A. Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy.
   B. Are the English Europeans?
C. Staying in the Euro zone.

7. Coming apart: Regionalism as nationalism.
   Selected readings via email
   A. The disunited kingdom.
   B. Basques, Catalans, Bretons and Walloons.
   C. Regionalism in Germany and Italy.

8. Economic power or aging dinosaur.
   Selected readings via email
   A. The old economy vs. the new.
   B. North vs. South.
   C. Trust no one under 50.

9. Social mobility plus or minus?
   Selected readings via email
   A. Class as a security blanket.
   B. Diversity in Uniformity.
   C. Educating an elite?

10. Can the safety net survive?
    Selected readings via email
    A. The European Way.
    B. Budgets, taxes and need.
    C. Growth or not?

11. Threats from west and west. Vlad and Donald.
    Selected readings via email
    A. What to do about Russia?
    B. Can the Europeans defend themselves?
    C. Trump as model and bogeyman.

12. The future as past.
    Selected readings via email
    A. Might nationalism save Europe?
    B. Is the Euro forever?
    C. Europe without Europeans?
HOLLYWOOD DIRECTORS GO TO WAR

Coordinators: John Becker and Howard Menikoff

In the early days of the Second World War, five of Hollywood’s most successful directors put their careers on hold and joined various branches of the US military. With varying degrees of creative freedom, these directors made films aimed at both our armed forces and civilians at home. John Ford, William Wyler, Frank Capra, John Huston and George Stevens left lucrative careers to serve the war effort. This study group considers two films by each of these directors -- one made before the war and one made after. We also examine several of the documentaries they made, as well as three classic Hollywood films about WWII, by other directors. Finally, we read excerpts from Five Came Back, a recent book describing what these directors did to win the hearts and minds of American soldiers and civilians.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Coursepack including biographical material on each of the five directors, as well as selections from Five Came Back by Mark Harris.

Students should watch It Happened One Night before the first session.
All films are available on Netflix.

John Becker has coordinated many study groups on cinema, literature and history.
Howard Menikoff has coordinated 25 cinema study groups.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********
Week 7:  *Twelve O’Clock High*
Week 8:  *Battleground*
Week 9:  *The Best Years of Our Lives* – Wiliam Wyler
Week 10: *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* – John Huston
Week 11: *My Darling Clementine* – John Ford
Week 12: *A Place in the Sun* – George Stevens
Week 13: *It’s a Wonderful Life* – Frank Capra
801
NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS SEMINAR

COORDINATOR: Jane Case Einbender

Each week a different member of the seminar takes full responsibility for leading an in-depth discussion of that week’s assigned essay from *The New York Review of Books*. Provision of supplementary information based upon prior study and/or research stimulated by the assignment is encouraged. The essays selected reflect the range of subject matter in this scholarly periodical which covers politics, history, science, philosophy and the arts as well as literature. Every participant must be willing to lead one class-length discussion.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
*The New York Review of Books*, 2nd December, January, February, March and April issues—print (non-electronic) editions ($7.95 per issue for non-subscribers). Registrants please save or purchase the 2nd December issue in early December. Supplementary readings are emailed each week.

Jane Case Einbender is an avid explorer of contemporary experience, as interested in cultural politics as in international politics. She has coordinated this seminar in previous semesters.

********* Syllabus - A Work in Progress *********

We strive for twelve intellectually rigorous discussions. The discussions depend on the mix of articles which appear in *The New York Review of Books* and the interests and expertise of the members who enroll in the seminar.

The articles in *The New York Review of Books* are selected as the semester unfolds and the syllabus grows accordingly. Additional readings are emailed each week.
American politics today has become so partisan that citizens on opposing sides seldom talk to one another, listen to the same news, read the same journals or even live in the same neighborhood. The purpose of this study group is to take a step to overcome this divide by examining the theory and policy proposals of contemporary American libertarians, traditional and reform conservatives, and populists on the assumption that they have ideas to offer that progressives—like the coordinators, most New Yorkers, and most IRP members—should seriously consider. We focus on theorists and analysts from think tanks, rather than politicians, tackling such issues as the nature and sources of social unity, the role of government and civic institutions, the relation between economics and politics and the balance between continuity and change. We focus on five policy areas: poverty/inequality, immigration, health care, taxes and education.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Coursepack and website.

Roger and his wife were long-term members of the Democratic National Finance Council. A graduate of Yale Law School, Roger practices with an international law firm, although he’d prefer to play third base for the NY Yankees.

Eileen, with a PhD from Columbia University in the history of political theory, has coordinated study groups on Plato and on the Irish in America.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

**Week 2: Libertarians—Theory**
Readings: From: Friedrich Hayek, The Road to Serfdom (1944); Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (1962) and, with Rose Friedman, Free to Choose (1980); Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia (1974); and Tom G. Palmer, Realizing Freedom: Libertarian Theory, History and Practice (2014)

**Week 3: Libertarians—Policy Proposals**
Readings: From: Michael Tanner, The Pros and Cons of a Guaranteed National Income (Cato Institute 2015) and 5 Myths about Economic Inequality in America (Cato Institute 2016); Stephen Moore and Stuart Anderson, Cutting Immigration Myths Down to Size (Cato Institute 1997)

**Week 4: Libertarians—Policy Proposals cont’d**

**Week 5: Traditional Conservatives—Theory**

**Week 6: Traditional Conservatives—Policy Proposals**

**Week 7: Traditional Conservatives—Policy Proposals cont’d**

**Week 8: Neoconservatives: Theory and Policy**

**Week 9: Reform Conservatives—Theory**

**Week 10: Reform Conservatives—Policy Proposals**

**Week 11: Reform Conservatives—Policy Proposals cont’d**

**Week 12: Populists/Anti-Elitists**
Online (2017)

Week 13: Conclusions
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THE JEWISH LOWER EAST SIDE

Coordinator: Fran De Lott

Between 1880 and 1914, close to two million eastern European Jews came to the United States in the aftermath of the Russian pogroms. Eighty-five percent of them settled in New York City and approximately 75% lived initially in the Lower East Side. This study group examines this mass migration of east European Jews and explores issues of changing identity and social/cultural patterns. We examine the lives and writings of key people and elements of the Jewish Lower East Side: the anarchist Emma Goldman; the editor of The Jewish Forward, Abraham Cahan; the socialist “Bund”; the actor-producer Lew Fields; and Tevye, a visitor who stayed.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
A coursepack includes the following: excerpts from Emma Goldman’s autobiography; biographical material from the Emma Goldman papers at University of California, Berkeley; documentary material from Emma Goldman A Documentary History Of The Early Years, Vol.1; excerpts from World of Our Fathers; excerpts from The Downtown Jews; fiction and nonfiction selections from The Jewish Forward; academic and non-academic articles; and links to YouTube segments.

Fran De Lott previously coordinated two summer study groups, one on crypto-Jews in New Spain and one on Dona Gracia: A Renaissance Jewish woman.

Guest Presenters:
Judy Goldman has coordinated many study groups including Bible: Journey from Tribe to Nation and Movies of the ‘60s. She presents the sessions on Tevye and Lew Fields.
Mark Scher previously coordinated study groups on Freedom of Religion and Landmark Supreme Court Cases. He presents the sessions on the “Bund.”

********** Syllabus: A Work in Progress **********
Week 1
Topic: Historical and social-cultural background in Eastern Europe and beginnings in New York City
Readings: Week 1 coursepack--excerpts from *World of Our Fathers* by Irving Howe.
Questions:
1. What major historical events precipitated the mass migration of east European Jews to the United States and how did these events influence the migration?
2. What led to the increasing pauperization of the shtetl, and what role did this phenomenon play in the migration?
3. What is “Yiddishkeit,” and what role did it play in Eastern European and Lower East Side Jewish cultures?
4. What early anarchist and socialist movements gathered there?

Week 2
Topic: Emma Goldman: her early years; the significant role of cafés and lectures in the Lower East Side; the self-educated worker
Readings: Week 2 coursepack--excerpts from Emma Goldman’s autobiography, *Living My Life*, *World of Our Fathers*, biographical material from the Emma Goldman Papers
Questions:
1. Why did Emma Goldman’s lecture at Union Square cause an uproar in the mainstream press? How did this contribute to her reputation as “Red Emma,” a dangerous radical, and to her prison sentence?
2. To which critical historical event did Emma Goldman attribute her “spontaneous” adoption of anarchism? Why do you think this event made such a deep impression on her?
3. What was Emma Goldman’s professed role in the “attentat,” the failed attempt by Alexander Berkman to assassinate Henry Clay Frick as the person responsible for the Homestead disaster?

Week 3
Topic: Emma Goldman: her personal life and selected writings
Readings: Week 3 course pack--excerpts from *Living My Life*, from the Emma Goldman Papers, and from *Emma Goldman A Documentary History Of The American Years* on Goldman’s first interview with the mainstream press, and her radical position on marriage and “The Free Woman.”
Questions:
1. What was your reaction to the content and tone of Emma Goldman’s interview with Nellie Bly?
2. Describe Emma Goldman’s views on marriage. How did her views differ from the common ethos in the United States at the turn of the 20th century?
3. Why do you think she made her views on marriage and the role of women an important feature of her national lecture tours?

Week 4
Topic: Emma Goldman: her personal life and various writings, cont.
Readings: Week 4 coursepack

Week 5
Topic: “The Bund”
Readings: Week 5 course pack--Jacobin Magazine, “Lessons From the Bund”, 2017; additional readings

Week 6
Readings: Week 6 course pack--Yad Vashem.Org., “The Bund-Like All The Jews, With All The Jews” by Matitahu Minc; additional readings

Week 7
Topic: Abraham Cahan: his personal life, his roles as long-term editor of The Jewish Forward and as a novelist
Readings: Week 7 coursepack--excerpts from The Downtown Jews by Ronald Sanders plus supplementary biographical sources; excerpts from The Jewish Forward, and excerpts from Cahan’s novel, The Rise of David Levinsky

Week 8
Topic: Abraham Cahan as newspaper editor and author
Readings: Week 8 coursepack--excerpts from The Downtown Jews and articles from The Jewish Forward, including “A Bintel Brief”

Week 9
Topic: Abraham Cahan, cont.
Readings: Week 9 coursepack--articles from The Jewish Forward
and short stories by Cahan and Jacob Adler

Week 10
Topic: Teyve from the Bowery to Broadway and beyond

Week 11
Topic: Lew Fields, actor-producer, from Second Avenue to the American Musical
Readings: Week 11 coursepack--Foreward and Introduction to From the Bowery to Broadway: Lew Fields and the Roots of American Popular Theater by Armond Fields and L. Marc Fields, 1993

Week 12
Topic: Memories and Wrap Up
Class Discussion
AN ACTOR PREPARES

Coordinator: Bruce Smith

An Actor Prepares combines an analysis of acting theories and practices that have evolved in American actor training with in-class exercises, textual analysis and performance. The study group focuses on the Stanislavski system, Strasberg’s “method” and related adaptations. Participants will develop the ability to interpret a play from the actor’s (and director’s) point of view, including character analysis; character’s relationship to a production’s interpretation; beat-by-beat scene analysis; and the application of these analyses to performing scenes in class. In-class exercises develop skills in concentration, sensory perception, playing an objective, physicalizing, overcoming obstacles, improvisation and working with other actors. After this study group, participants should be able to more fully appreciate and assess acting performances in the professional theatre.

NOTE: This study group is designed for people with little or no previous acting training. **Participants must meet and rehearse with other participants outside of class-time.**

Readings:
Edward Albee: *At Home at the Zoo - Acting Edition*, (Dramatists Play Service Inc.).

NOTE: *Hedda Gabler* and *At Home at the Zoo* are only used in script analysis and scene presentations in class. Study group members need the Rolf Fjelde translation of *Hedda Gabler* and the Acting Edition of *At Home at the Zoo* to participate.

Coursepack: Essays on acting training theory and technique covering Constantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasberg, Robert Lewis and other variations on Stanislavski’s acting theory and practice. (Approximate cost $15.00)
Bruce Smith taught theatre and directed plays for 20+ years at the college level. Once upon a time, he thought he wanted to be an actor.

******** Syllabus - A Work in Progress ********

NOTE: Every study group session will be split between a discussion of the topics listed below for each week and exercises and practical activities by participants that illustrate the topics presented.

Week 1
Introduction of study group design and objectives.
What is “American acting?”
Acting before Stanislavski
Stanislavski in America

Weeks 2-3
Stanislavski’s view of actor development.
“Objectives,” “Super-Objective” and “through line of objectives”
Actor’s Physical Apparatus: Voice, movement, gesture, etc.
Building a character

Week 4
Applying Stanislavski to the analysis of a sample play (The Zoo Story)
Introduction to “Beat Analysis”

Week 5
Beat Analysis Workshop

Week 6
Evolution of Strasberg’s Method
The Method: “Emotional Honesty” & “Private Moments”
Role of the actor vs. role of the playwright
The Actor’s Studio

Week 7
Alternative Approaches: Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner
Stella Adler: The Actor Alone
Sanford Meisner: The Actor’s Relationship with Other Actors
Robert Lewis: Bringing it all together

**Week 8-9**
Applying Objectives, Super-Objectives, and Beat Analyses
Analyzing *Hedda Gabler* for an actor
  • What is this play about?
  • What are the major given circumstances?
  • What is the “through line of action”?
  • What are the characters’ super-objectives?

**Week 10**
Discuss beat analyses
Sample Scene Preparation

**Week 11**
Scene presentations and critiques

**Week 12**
Scene presentations and critiques

**Week 13**
Revised scene presentations if time permits.
Reflection on acting experiences
**NOTE:** Please keep this date open in case we need it to complete scene studies.
Are you tired of having your auto-focus, auto-exposure camera making every artistic decision about how your images will look? While modern cameras are very good at mechanically recording a scene, there is a whole world of expressive capabilities available “after-capture” in the digital darkroom. Adobe Lightroom (LR) is a program that is widely used by both professionals and serious amateurs to organize and “develop” their images. We use our own images to explore the capabilities of LR by way of hands-on practice and sharing our insights in using the program. Homework consists largely of viewing on-line tutorials that are available without charge on the web.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:
Adobe Lightroom software is required plus a laptop computer that can be used for homework and brought to all class sessions.

A subscription to the Adobe Photoshop Creative Cloud Photography Plan ($9.99/mo. annual plan, paid monthly) includes Lightroom and Photoshop.
http://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/photography.html

Optional Text:

or

Jonathan Gaines was a corporate lawyer. He has co-coordinated several study groups and is an amateur photographer who uses
Jerry Vogel is a retired engineer. After many years of printmaking in a traditional darkroom he is delighted to have made the switch to digital. He finds Lightroom indispensable for managing and post-processing his images.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

Week 1: Overview of the LR user interface and how to import images
Week 2: Basic adjustments: exposure, color balance, contrast and saturation
Week 3: Managing your photos: naming, file structure and rating
Week 4: Using the histogram
Week 5: Enhancing isolated areas using the adjustment brush
Week 6: Hue, saturation and luminance
Week 7: Converting photos to black and white
Week 8: Removing lens distortion and correcting perspective
Week 9: Exporting images
Week 10: Working with groups of images
Week 11: Putting it all together to achieve your vision
Week 12: Creating a slideshow
Martin Scorsese is recognized as one of the most influential filmmakers in history. He has been nominated for eight best director Academy Awards, as well as winning almost every significant film award in Europe. He is a leading film preservationist and film historian. Three of his films (*Raging Bull*, *Taxi Driver* and *Goodfellas*) are listed on the American Film Institute’s 100 Greatest American Films. Known for his violent crime movies, Scorsese has also made religious epics, black comedies, biopics and musicals. A common theme running through most of his work involves concepts of guilt and a need for redemption. This study group deals with Scorsese’s narrative films, but other aspects of his life and work are discussed.

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**
The films listed in the syllabus in DVD or streaming formats.

Like Scorsese, **Howie** chose not to enter the priesthood. He had no interest in the subject. This might have been because of his Jewish upbringing. Instead he has coordinated over twenty film study groups for the IRP.

********** Syllabus - A Work in Progress **********

Week 1: *Mean Streets* (1973)
Week 2: *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (1974)
Week 3: *Taxi Driver* (1976)
Week 4: *The King of Comedy* (1982)
Week 7: *Goodfellas* (1990)
Week 8: *The Age of Innocence* (1993)
Week 12: *Hugo* (2011)
TWO SIDES OF THE MIRROR: LATINO REFLECTIONS ACROSS BORDERS

Coordinator: Mireya Perez-Bustillo

In John Freeman’s *Tales of Two Americas: Stories of Inequality in a Divided Nation*, he attempts to create a new framework for understanding what it is like to live in a country divided by race, class, ethnicity and national origin. Through powerful stories, essays and poems he recasts the narrative of poverty and inequality and allows the words of the authors to show how borders can be broken down to reshape the story of America. This study group focuses on the particular challenges that Latino immigrants face in realizing the American dream.

**Readings:**

*Mireya Perez-Bustillo* has a PhD in Spanish Literature; studied Caribbean Studies at NYU; writes literary criticism, poetry and fiction.

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**Week 1:** What are border/lines? How does it relate to the U.S. today?
**Week 2:** Physical representations of border/lines; Frida Kahlo, Ai Wei Wei.
**Week 3:** *Chulas Fronteras*, documentary in class and discussion
**Week 4:** *Notes of a Native Daughter*, Sandra Cisneros, p. 21
**Week 5:** *Mobility*, Julia Alvarez, p. 39
**Week 6:** *La Ciudad Magica*, Patricia Engel, p. 294
**Week 7:** *Fieldwork*, Manuel Muñoz, p. 59
**Week 8:** Site visit to El Museo del Barrio and neighborhood
**Week 9:** Discussion based on site visit; handouts, poetry selections
**Week 10:** Reading and discussion of poetry selections
**Week 11:** Class presentations and discussion
**Week 12:** Visits by guest writers – Potluck Fiesta and discussion
GUIDED AUTOBIOGRAPHY I: TELLING YOUR LIFE STORY

Coordinator: David Grogan

Guided Autobiography is based on a course developed by James Birren, a social psychologist, to help older adults organize their life stories. This is a writing workshop focused more on the process of life review than on producing polished prose. Weekly themes evoke memories of events that include the nuggets of good stories. The study group is open to anyone who wants to take stock of the experiential wisdom they have accumulated over the years and tell their life story, but doesn’t know where to begin. Few of us can be considered natural-born writers, yet each of us has a story to tell. Be yourself. Tell your life story, in 750-to-1000 word weekly installments, with non-judgmental support and inspiration from your peers.

David Grogan is a former magazine editor.

Readings and other Materials:
Supplementary readings and priming questions for thematic stories are provided on a weekly basis by the study group coordinator.

******** Syllabus - a Work in Progress ********

Each study group participant writes a two-page story every week on a progressive sequence of themes and, in the process, creates a 7500-to-10,000 word memoir by the end of the term.

Week 1: Introduction and impromptu writing exercises.

Week 2: Turning Points Each of us experiences unique events or moments of insight that propel us in one direction or another. They may be big events such as marriage, war, moving to a new city or retirement. Or they may be small events that had big outcomes, such as a chance encounter with a stranger that changed the course of your life.

Week 3: Family Our families of origin (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins) can exert a powerful influence on the course of our lives, for good or ill, that can reach across generations.
Week 4: **Money**  Most of us learn our financial values early in life. We mimic those around us, picking up both good and bad habits. And how we manage our wealth through the course of our lives reflects how we see the world.

Week 5: **Work**  Most of us work to live; the lucky ones live to work. In either case, our life’s work includes the activities that occupy a lion’s share of our time and energy. Many people change careers several times or have to balance two, sometimes three, jobs at once. Others stay with the same job for decades. In some cases, volunteer work is a person’s most important legacy. In one form or another, the work we do defines who we are.

Week 6: **Health**  Good health is one of the primary components of our well-being. Acute or chronic illnesses, whether experienced personally or by someone close to us, can lead to major changes in the way we live. Health and self-image are also often intertwined in complex ways.

Week 7: **Gender Identity**  Our ideas about what it means to be a woman or a man evolve and come from many sources, including family members, friends, reading and our experiences in life. This identity can vary with different periods of life. A young girl may grow up as a tomboy and strongly express her male attributes. A young boy may grow up delighting in the more feminine aspects of life and feel disinclined to participate in the rough-and-tumble world of sports and skinned knees. As sexual preferences come into play, further categorization may define us as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or straight.

Week 8: **Death**  Our perceptions of death can affect our lives in many ways. As a child, the death of a pet or a national hero may have had a profound impact on you. Or the loss of someone close to you may have pushed death to the forefront of your reality at an early age. You may have had a close call with death and been given a second chance to appreciate what you almost lost. You might fear dying. Or perhaps you’ve accepted it as inevitable.

Week 9: **Spirituality**  The history of our spiritual lives need not be confined to experiences in organized religion. Nor does it necessarily
exclude someone who is an agnostic or atheist. In a broad sense, the notion of spirituality encompasses the quest to discover meaning and purpose in our lives. Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?

Week 10: Life Goals Our goals and aspirations form an integral part of the fabric of our lives. Over time, experience may teach us that we should change our goals or change our aspirations for new ones that better fit with the realities of our lives and our changing values.

Week 11 and 12: Wrap-up: Themes for Further Exploration.