The Master of Liberal Studies program is committed to providing flexible graduate education that is interdisciplinary in nature, emphasizing the values of liberal education for mature persons. LS seminars expect participants to encounter and reflect upon the important ideas, debates, and issues that define contemporary life.

LS seminars are intended to deepen student’s grasp of seminal ideas and/or critical problems of life and mind – ideas and problems that both shape and give meaning to the human experience. This is done by drawing on the methods or perspectives of more than a single discipline, hopefully in ways that instill new insights and cut through the often arbitrary discipline-centered boundaries of traditional higher education. LS seminars try to use the light or perspective of one discipline to illuminate another, or to use more than one perspective to illuminate a specific issue or problem.

LS seminars are designed to push both the student and the faculty member to new ways of thinking and learning. Unique relationships between students and between students and the instructor are formed as all “feel their way through the woods together.” They are not lecture-based, but instead have more of a laboratory feel as different thoughts and formulations are brought forward through free-flowing discussions, in both small and all-class groups.

Samples of previously offered seminars:

The Arts and Innovation: Crossing Barriers
The presence of the arts in today’s society is inseparable from its infusion in all aspects of commerce and industry, politics and social/economic/philosophical issues, not to neglect its challenge to values on both a moral and ethical level. What is the role the arts today, and how are the arts integrated into advancing business practices, innovation and growth? In all instances, the arts – musical, visual, performative, theatrical, and literary – have tested the way we perceive and understand phenomena in everyday reality and given permission to better comprehend how we function on multiple levels of existence. The goal is to demonstrate how the complex culture of the arts stimulate consciousness and encourage imaginative and creative innovation and innovative practices in the business sectors of society. - DonnaMae Gustafson & Roslye Ultan

I, Robot: Human Identity in the Biotechnical Age
We are all “fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs,” theorist Donna Haraway famously declared in the 1980s, advocating that we embrace our evolving human (organic)-machine (technology) hybridity with agency and responsibility. Since the Industrial
Revolution, the boundaries between science fiction and social reality have been dissolving as our physical reliance on and adaptation to new technologies (in medicine, communications, entertainment, bioengineering, mass production and even waging war) have continued unabated. But how often do we think critically about how bio and machine technology are changing our minds and bodies; or how images and message in visual (particularly popular) culture promote, romanticize or warn against biotechnological enhancement? In short, how often do we investigate what it means to be human in the 21st century? Explore how artists have interrogated human-technological hybridity from Mary Shelley’s novel “Frankenstein” through the Dadaist art movement’s photomontages and collages, to contemporary performance artist Stelarc’s extreme investigations of human-machine interface. Analyze how our daily integrations with technology (from heart pacemakers to cell phones) are extending life and augmenting lifestyles. Examine how cyborg imagery and characters in science-fiction film and television serve as metaphors for human-technological integration. Discover how such hotly contested philosophical and cultural movements as “transhumanism” and “posthumanism” are shaping our transformation, as well as theological and ethical debates. Locate your place in the continuum of cyborg evolution, and acquire the critical agency to determine your human-technological identity and purpose in the 21st century.
– John Moravec/Camille LaFevre

**The Psychology of Sustainability**

Are you striving to live a more earth-friendly, sustainable life? Do you often feel frustrated because the "right" (i.e. sustainable) thing to do is so much more complicated than the non-sustainable thing? What motivates you to go out of your way to do something "green", even when it is inconvenient or difficult? What surprises you most about other people’s sustainable (or unsustainable) behavior? Explore some of the important psychological research findings and how they can help create situations that encourage sustainable action. Examine eight recommendations from psychology: Making sustainable behavior the social default; making it personally relevant; making hidden information visible; fostering mindfulness; creating opportunities to build knowledge and competence; making change a byproduct; balancing urgency with realistic hope; and reconnecting with nature. For each recommendation, real-world examples will be presented. – Christine Manning

**Feminists Go to the Movies**

Explore the field of feminist media studies through the lens of gender, race, and sexuality, and become familiar with the terminology, history and theoretical issues through readings and corresponding visual and popular media. Examine media through the connections between various social relations like gender, sexuality, race and class and discuss key concepts in feminist film studies including the male gaze, scopophilia, and identification. Analyze popular media critically rather than as passive consumers of information. You will be introduced not only to the structure and styles of mainstream media representations but also the politics therein. With a focus on constructions of race, gender, and sexuality, the course offers examples of media that are produced in resistance to and outside of the mainstream culture, to illustrate the possibilities of alternative and more socially conscious representations. – Jigna Desai

**Sustainability and Sustainable Enterprise**

Protecting and improving our future well-being will require wiser and less destructive uses of natural assets and major changes to the way we make and implement decisions. Now, more than ever, new opportunities are emerging for innovative technologies, strategies and policy that embrace a sustainable approach to living and working on the planet new models that address systematic and long-term challenges to environmental and social quality. Consider the global trend
of sustainable development and its implications for business and governance. Attention will be
given to systems-based approaches to whole enterprise sustainability and new trends in private
governance, organizational strategy formation, sustainability reporting and behavioral
transformation. Focus on the development of critical understanding of the principles of
sustainability indicators for business and society, and, how organizations can maximize benefits
associated with the demand for sustainable development. – Tim Smith

**Wicked Problem Solving: Evolutionary Rationalism**

Group change often demands adaptive processing options. Traditional rhetorical approaches often
limit the options for innovation. This offering provides an introduction to Knowledge Management.
Apply the five-step process of identifying needs, determining essential knowledge, evaluating
information sources, initiating learning, and developing efficient dissemination systems in group
and/or organizations with which you are familiar. – David Scheulke

**Design Thinking for Innovation**

We are in a time of profound societal change between old ways of thinking and doing and new
ways that are still emerging. Innovation and new tools and process are needed to help make the
change. Design thinking is a tool/process of great promise for this transition. Using the techniques
that designers have used for ages, it is now possible for anyone who is willing to engage in creative
thinking and action to participate in designing new ways of being and doing. This seminar is
designed to introduce you to the emerging field of design thinking and how it is inspiring creativity
and innovation at a local and national level. We will use immersion in writing, design and creativity
exercises in class, individually and in groups, as a means of understanding the design thinking
process in action. No prior design experience is required. Bringing insights and challenges from
your particular disciplines to class discussions and activities is encouraged. – Virajita Singh

**The Inconstant Nature of Nature**

As we ponder the value of natural sustainability, i.e., the preservation of the non-manufactured
world, it behooves us to consider just what we mean by “natural.” Generally we regard as natural
anything that has not been changed through human agency, and for many of us this pristine state
is inherently a good. But down through history – and today as well – our relationship to the
environment has been defined in various ways, ways that reflect our deepest values and
assumptions; examining “the nature of Nature” can give us a clearer, more nuanced, picture of this
concept and its implications for the economic, cultural, and political perspectives of contemporary
life. Here are a few distinctive versions of the meaning of Nature and natural process that will be
covered; content will be built around these core notions, exemplifying them through music,
literature, the arts, social movements, scientific developments, etc.: “Nature methodized” –
Alexander Pope’s phrase for describing art, which implies the subjugation of nature to the
necessary, civilizing influence of humans; a quintessentially Enlightenment view; cycles of history –
extrapolating from seasonal process, Hegel developed the mystical idea that historical development
likewise followed a circular pattern; The Seething Cauldron – Freud’s idea that our lives are
determined by how successfully we can keep a lid on our volatile, libidinous aggressiveness;
Environmentalism – contemporary socioeconomic developments and their cultural equivalents. –
DonnaMae Gustafson & Nick Pease

**Understanding Radical Behaviorism**

B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) was perhaps the most eminent academic psychologist of the 20th
Century. It is therefore surprising how little most people, including many psychologists, actually
know about Radical Behaviorism, Skinner’s philosophy of behavior science, and Behavior Analysis,
its closely related technology. This seminar critically examines the conceptual foundations of
Behaviorism, its practical implications for a wide range of social institutions and issues, and the possibilities it offers for effectively doing something about problems that confront us today. What does it mean to explain something, or to understand or to know or to believe something? Challenge many hallowed and traditional habits of thought, and explore perspectives that are more in common with Eastern thinking (e.g. Zen Buddhism) than with more familiar, and largely unquestioned, Western belief systems. – *Gail Peterson*

**Designing Professional Futures** Guided story-writing and journaling provide complementary methods for exploring the design of plausible futures. Each student will develop a personal futures design portfolio. High quality participation and individual self-development are stressed. Online Seminar - *Arthur Harkins & John Tomsyck*

**Is Journalism Dead? Objectivity, Bias, and the Future of the News**
American journalism faces a crisis of credibility. Best-selling books accuse the news media of liberal or conservative bias, while journalists and scholars question the meaning of journalistic objectivity as a concept and the validity of the methods by which journalists pursue it. Meanwhile, the audiences for traditional news media have declined sharply and newsrooms are being reorganized to better meet the needs of advertisers and audiences largely uninterested in public affairs, and new media such as blogs and other Internet websites have emerged that compete with traditional news sources. As consumers' media options have expanded, mass audiences have been fragmented, raising concerns about the ability to the news media to play the role in public life envisioned by democratic theory. The fields of journalism and philosophy (specifically epistemology and ethics) are used to examine these trends and consider their implications for the future of journalism and American society. – *Jeremy Igers*

**The Critic Among Us: Science, Literature, and the Arts**
Focus on four watershed periods when critical thinkers provided syntheses and innovation from which new directions of thought and behavior took shape. Explore Watson and Crick's Double Helix paired with Silent Spring by Rachel Carson; abstract expressionism as it was identified and championed by two quite different theorists, Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg; early thinkers of the contemporary feminist movement, Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir; and finally two radical reshapers of African-American history, bell hooks and Toni Morrison. By imbedding these critics in their times, discovery of how crucial their innovations were can take place. – *Margot Galt*

**Emergent Patterns in Human Affairs**
A critical and collaborative investigation of the appropriateness of applying concepts drawn from the sciences of complexity to the world of human affairs. The seminar will begin with background readings in chaos/complexity theory. Then we will examine several case studies: books that show the generation of complex social/cultural patterns from relatively simple principles. As the seminar progresses, students will have an opportunity to critically examine a topic of their choosing. Throughout this conversation, anticipated questions include: Are the large patterns seen in human affairs like those of natural processes? Does the fact that humans make choices about perspectives and actions make a difference? What meaning can be found in human history? Under what conditions can an individual's actions be decisive? - *David Shupe*

**Leadership and Change in an Innovation Society**
Change is often built into definitions of leadership, and certainly many scholars and practitioners have written about how leaders can foster change in their organizations or communities. As the U.S. and other countries move more fully into the “innovation economy”, understanding the links
between leadership and change take on increased urgency. Leaders will need conceptual tools and practical skills to promote innovative organizations that thrive in and contribute to an innovative society. Examine models of change and leadership, and investigate how leaders can promote personal, organizational, and society change. Case studies and action research will be emphasized. – Barbara Crosby

The Meaning of Life
From the cave paintings of pre-history, through the recorded history of Eastern and Western culture, philosophy, theology, psychology, science, literature and art, men and women have looked beyond the limits of their daily existence in attempts to grasp and define the meaning of life. This seminar studies how biological contributors to perception, emotion and human behavior is contrasted with psychological literature about the functions of the individual and collective unconscious mind. Theological texts from western and eastern religions will be compared and contrasted, with a focus on the common characteristics of the varieties of religious experiences and their implication to life's deeper meaning. Review the history of philosophical inquiry on this topic, from Aristotle to Foucault. Students will be challenged to broaden their perceptions of life's meaning through both scholarly and personalized approaches to this complex and fascinating topic. - William Dikel, Justin O'Brien

21st Century America: Race and Ethnicity in the New Millennium
21st century America will become a so-called "minority-majority" country. Groups historically classified as racial minorities will actually represent over 50% of America's population by 2050. Indeed, this shift has complex and interesting implications for education, politics, family, culture, and a range of other societal and individual realities. Our focus is on understanding the remaking of "race" and "ethnicity" in the 21st century in America. What does it mean for the U.S. to be a multi-ethnic/multiracial society today? What policy changes are occurring and need to be put into place given these shifts? What history undergirds the current moment, and where do we go from here? Careful attention will be paid to the educational, political and social policy implications of the changing demographics. – Rose Brewer

Older and/but Wiser?: Contexts of Aging
How can we gain a comprehensive understanding of the transitions and challenges facing older people? Employ a spectrum of interpretive lenses to examine this increasingly longer segment of American life. Geriatrics will provide the basis for understanding and caring for the aging person in health and illness; and gerontology will add social and economic perspectives, including work, retirement, and changing environments for living. Psychology will offer theories of development and accounts of the aging mind, including how to stay vitally involved in a youth-oriented society. Examples from art, photography, film, autobiography, drama, poetry, and fiction will help flesh out the contours of what it means to grow old; and religion and philosophy will provide leads to the inward turn and wisdom as one draws nearer to death. – Stephen Daniel

Revising the Canon: Readings in Cultural Thought
In "The Ethic Canon," critic David Palumbo-Liu suggests that we develop a "critical multiculturalism" that "explores the fissures, tensions, and sometimes contradictory demands of multiple cultures, rather than (only) celebrating the plurality of cultures by passing through them appreciatively." Through an exploration of theoretical texts from the fields of critical theory, cultural studies, comparative ethnic studies, queer studies and post-colonial theory, investigate the frameworks informing multiculturalism as a critical theoretical constellation. Consider the relationships among key concepts such as center/margin, authorship/authority, power/discourse/ideology, identity/representation, the politics of difference, the Other, cultural
capital, the erotic, and nation/neo-colonialism, among others. Readings will include works by Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Adrienne Rich, Toni Morrison, Herman Gray, Trinh Minh-Ha, and others. The intersection of these theories will be concerned within the U.S. nation, the Americas, and globally. The goal is to become familiar with the intellectual history that underwrites multiculturalism, and in so doing, challenge the assumption that multiculturalism is atheoretical. – Anita Gonzalez