

Examples of TASP Seminars

Education and Citizenship

University of Maryland, 2020

Campbell F. Scribner, University of Maryland; Ethan Hutt, University of North Carolina

This seminar encourages students to think about one of the communities with which they are most familiar: schools. By studying the foundations of education, students will explore the dilemmas underlying democratic self-government. Central questions include: What does it mean to be an educated citizen, and is everyone (or anyone) capable of that standard? Which values are most important in education (freedom? equality? justice? self-realization?) and what should we do when they come into conflict? How do schools create community, and to what extent should they tolerate a diversity of beliefs? Are children ultimately the property of their parents or the state? Can education overcome prejudice? Students will examine the topic from a diverse set of disciplinary perspectives (including law, history, philosophy, and sociology) and ideological perspectives (ranging from libertarianism and conservatism to Marxism, postmodernism, and liberal pragmatism.) To underscore the relevance of class discussions, we plan to take students on field trips to Washington, D.C., to meet with Congressional staffers involved with educational policymaking.

Thinking About Cities: In Particular, Detroit

University of Michigan, 2017

Deborah Dash Moore, University of Michigan; Jason Schulman, New York University

A city is not just a place, it's an idea. Its residents construct not only buildings, but also communities that define what the city stands for and what the city is all about.

A city is compact enough to allow for interactions and exchanges, both welcome and unwanted. How do thousands of people, crammed into a relatively small geographic area, get along? How do they live and work together to foster governance, community, law and order, and prosperity?

This course explores urban diversity, Detroit-style. We will look at the racial, ethnic, and religious diversity of Detroit, the twentieth century's quintessential American metropolis. We will examine its rich and complex history of racial, ethnic, and religious conflict, competition,

and cooperation through a focus on a single street: Chene Street. Home to Polish and Italian Catholic and East European Jewish immigrants and African Americans, Chene Street offers a microcosm for urban historical research.

Through the transformation of Chene Street from the most prosperous shopping street in Detroit into a veritable urban wilderness, the course asks how America's fourth largest city, synonymous with the American automobile industry and with a style of popular African American music, dealt with the intersection of diversity with politics, law, and economics.

Freedom Summer

Cornell University, 2019

La TaSha Levy, University of Washington; Nicole Burrowes, University of Texas at Austin

This course examines one of the most radical moments in civil rights history—the 1964 Mississippi Project. Widely known as “Freedom Summer,” this civil rights campaign organized a multi-faceted program that challenged white supremacy in education and racial terror in the community through the establishment of Freedom Schools, voter registration drives, and an alternative political party called the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Even more, Freedom Summer called on Black women and men from the community, many of whom were poor and uneducated, to lead their own movement.

It was during the Freedom Summer campaign that activists debated the merits of non-violence vs. self-defense; the limits of charismatic male leadership; and the role of white allies in the struggle for Black freedom. In the face of extraordinary violence and economic deprivation, Black Mississippians waged one of the most powerful, yet understudied, movements in civil rights history, and they modeled the maxim that “ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things.”

Using primary sources, music, film, and scholarly texts, students will explore the 1964 Freedom Summer Project in order to understand diverse struggles, leadership styles, and competing interpretations of what it means to be free. Borrowing directly from the original Freedom School curriculum, students will contemplate the “myths of society” as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks necessary for the creation of a just society. This course also seeks to draw connections through a roaming classroom format in which we will gather at various historic sites in our surrounding community on occasion.

Protest Poetics: Art and Performance in Freedom Movements

University of Maryland, 2018

Jakeya Caruthers, Stanford University; Isaiah Wooden, American University

Description: Social justice is an art form. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists and activists have recognized how our aesthetic drives—those that inform our relationship to art, beauty, and the richness of experience—are often inseparable from our moral, ethical, and intellectual drive toward justice. Indeed, as history has demonstrated, art is rarely simply a satellite strategy of social movements. Rather, "politics" animate performance and visual art as much as aesthetics inform the actions, words, and events we associate with movement-building and resistance. Too, we find that, beyond the explicit, "formal" business of art and protest, the imagery and icons that populate our everyday lives are also deeply infused with symbolic meaning and practical consequence, and for that reason, are often ripe and constant tools (and objects) of artful dissent.

In this course, then, we will discuss political art that appears in both formal and informal sites of practice. In addition to close study of the form and content of these works, we will also place the art and happenings in historical and theoretical context. In our exploration of these pieces, we will address critical questions about humanity, citizenship, the body, race, gender, feeling, and the simultaneous treachery and power of the visual. With works that include the visual and performance art of black struggle, the protest work of AIDS activism, anti-war art, and even more recent movements protesting racial violence, gentrification, and the prison-industrial complex, we will investigate the fault lines of art and efficacy in the context of political change.