SAMPLE FOCUS FIELDS AND PLANS OF STUDY
COMMITTEE ON DEGREES IN SOCIAL STUDIES
Based on work by the Social Studies Classes of 2015 and 2016

1. Race, Class, and Social Change in Urban America

Courses:

Sociology 150, “Neighborhood Effects and the Social Order of the City”
Sociology 183, “Race and Ethnic Relations”
AAAS 122x, “The History of African Americans from the Civil War to the Present”
Economics 1420, “American Economic Policy”

Senior Thesis:

Trading in Race: Gentrification, Small Business, and the Prospects for the Black Inner City

Descriptive Paragraph:

This focus field applies three valuable disciplinary approaches to a location that has always piqued my interest. Growing up in suburban Chicago, I witnessed vast inequalities between neighborhoods like mine and the socially, economically, and politically isolated communities of the city and even my suburb. My focus field combines economic, sociological, and racial-theoretical lenses in addressing these place-based issues. Areas of particular interest within this field, which pull from all three of these disciplines, includes the influence of race on the gentrification process, the effects of gentrification on neighborhood social and institutional life, and the prospects for equitable economic development in urban areas.

2. Migration and Identity Politics in Europe

Courses:

History 1206, “Empire, Nation, and Immigration in France since 1870”
Government 94mg, “The Politics of Immigration”
Government 94da, “Democracy, Alienation, and Muslims in the West”
Study Abroad in Paris: “Nations and Nationalism”
Study Abroad in Paris: “Directed Study: Police and Minorities”

Senior Thesis:

Unequal Before the Republic: Racial Minorities, Urban Policing, and the Unmaking of the Citizen in France
Descriptive Paragraph:

Migration is radically changing the ways in which we construct and deconstruct our identities and the ways in which we position ourselves in relation to the communities we belong to. In recent years, immigration has become an extremely pressing issue in the European Union not only from the perspective of policy-making but also from the perspectives of identity transforming the face of centuries-old European nation-states. Within this context, I am particularly interested in studying France because I believe that its history poses unique challenges to our understanding of national identity in the context of migration.

3. Informal Economies in Southern Africa (Joint with AAAS)

AAAS S-171: Pre-colonial and Colonial Perspectives on African Economy, Society, Politics, and Law
AAAS S-188, “Colonialism and the Dialectics of Modernity”
Anthropology 1988, “Kinship, Citizenship, and Belonging”
Government 1197, “The Political Economy of Africa”
AAAS 212, “Entrepreneurship in Africa”
AAAS 105x, “Anthropology and Africa”

Senior Thesis:

A Fruitful Business: The Sustainable Nature of Informal Produce Vending and the Rastafari Moral Economy in Cape Town, South Africa

Descriptive Paragraph

As a joint Social Studies and African Studies concentrator, I am especially interested in the social sciences in relation to Africa. After studying abroad in South Africa for the past two summers, I spent this summer in Cape Town researching the sustainability of informal fruit and vegetable markets, particularly the role of Rastafari vendors. This focus field provides a broader examination of how social, political, and economic processes within southern Africa impact sustainability and entrepreneurship in the informal sector. Many of the courses within this field focus on theory from the Global South, which allows me to integrate social theory into an otherwise more pragmatic focus field and thesis topic.

4. Political Philosophy and the American Revolution

Courses:
History 60m, “How to Start Your Own Country: Sovereignties and State Formation”
Government 1072, “Political Thought in the American Founding”
Government 1080, “American Political Thought”
USW 20, “Theory of American Government”
Government 94hk, “Early American Political Institutions”
Senior Thesis:

_American Foundationalism: Creating Political Legitimacy in the Second Continental Congress_

5. **Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention in the Developing World**

_Courses:_

History 1329, “Human Rights: History and Theory”  
Societies of the World 25, “Case Studies in Global Health: Biosocial Perspectives”  
Government 40, “International Conflict and Cooperation”

Senior Thesis:

Permanent Impermanence: Identity and Agency in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, Tanzania

6. **Inequality in the American Legal System**

_Courses:_

Government 1510, “Constitutional Law”  
History 1010, “The History of the Prison”  
Sociology 193, “Crime, Community, and Public Policy”  
Anthropology 1672, “Legal Anthropology”  
Sociology 177, “Poverty in America”

Senior Thesis:

Flawed Justice: A Study of Public Defenders and their Clients in New York City's Criminal Court

7. **American Educational Policy**

_Courses:_

History 2450, “The History of Education in the United States”  
Economics 1820, “Education Reform in America”  
Economics 1410, “Public Economics”

Senior Thesis:

Trust the Evaluator, Trust the Score: A Quantitative Exploration of Predictors of Teachers’ Confidence in Evaluation
8. Social Change in Contemporary China

Courses:

East Asian Studies 128, “Ideology in Contemporary Chinese Politics”
Anthropology 1732, “China Through Ethnography and Film”
Sociology 189, “Democracy and Social Movements in East Asia”

Senior Thesis:

Navigating Personal & Public Identities: Aspirations of Legal Aid Workers at a Migrant Worker Legal NGO in Beijing

9. Justice and Contemporary Political Philosophy (Joint with Philosophy, Study Abroad with Social Studies at Jesus College, Cambridge Program)

Courses:

Philosophy 271, “Political Philosophy: Seminar”
Study Abroad at Jesus College, Cambridge: “Distributive Justice”
Study Abroad at Jesus College, Cambridge: “Global Justice”
Government 2088, “The Ethical Foundations of Political Thought”

Senior Thesis:

Two Concepts of Justice: Luck Egalitarianism and the Problem of Universalism

10. Public Health, Knowledge, and Power

Courses:

Societies of the World 25, “Case Studies in Global Health”
Sociology 168, “Sociology of Biomedicine and Biotechnology”
History of Science 209, “Science and Religion: Debates, Approaches, and Controversies”
History of Science 253, “Bioethics, Law, and the Life Sciences”

Senior Thesis:

Giving Patients a Piece of Their Mind: Mental Health, Pharmaceuticals, and the Democratization of Medical Information
11. Religion, Gender, and Politics in Contemporary Latin America

Courses:

History 1926, “How Historians Imagine Latin American Pasts”
Government 20, “Introduction to Comparative Politics”
Sociology 24, “Introduction to Social Inequality”
Anthropology 1795, “The Politics of Language and Identity in Latin America”
Anthropology 2805, “Biopolitics”
Spanish 71a, “Continuity and Discontinuity in Colonial Latin America”

Senior Thesis:

*Defending Kichwa: Gendered Representations of Power and Political Agency in the Ecuadorian Amazon*

12. Privacy and Technology in A Digital Society

Courses:

USW 39, “History of American Democracy”
Government 94jb, “Secrecy and Transparency”
Computer Science 105, “Privacy and Technology”
Government 1430, “The Politics of Personal Data”
Government 94, “Cyberpolitics”

Senior Thesis:

*I Agree to the Terms and Conditions: How Data Collection Threatens Privacy*