SAMPLE FOCUS FIELDS AND PLANS OF STUDY
COMMITTEE ON DEGREES IN SOCIAL STUDIES
Based on work by the Social Studies Classes of 2020 and 2021

1. Migration and Transnationalism in Asian America

Courses:

History 12E, “Migrant Geographies: Between Asia and the United States in the 20th Century”
Sociology 1132, “Global and Transnational Sociology”
Social Studies 68CT, “The Chinese Immigrant Experience in America”
EMR 137, “Asian American Mobility and Transpacific Movements”

Senior Thesis:

Conflicted Belonging: Youth Experiences of Local and Imagined Community at Chinese Schools in the United States

Descriptive Paragraph:

The field of Asian American studies has recently taken a transnational turn. Rather than tether “Asian America” to the continental United States, scholarship increasingly focuses on how flows of people, goods, and processes have long connected Asia and the Americas. This focus field examines migration, mobility, and transnationalism between Asia and the Americas in both historical and contemporary contexts. Today, Asian America comprises diverse groups of people, including migrants, children of migrants, and individuals who otherwise retain transnational ties. How do migration, mobility, and their resultant processes shape and illuminate societal inequality and outcomes? How do individuals and communities navigate their experiences and personal histories? I examine these and related questions from perspectives of history, sociology, anthropology, and Asian American and mobility studies. My senior thesis investigates identity formation in Chinese American youth, focusing on Chinese heritage language schools as a locus of conflict amidst varied narratives of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation.

2. 21st Century Populism in the Post-Industrial World

Courses:

History 14L, “The Crisis of Social Democracy”
Sociology 24, “Introduction to Social Inequality”
Government 94ZD, “Dilemmas of Democracy”
Government 1780, “International Political Economy”
General Education 1054, “Political Economy and Its Future”
History 83A, “Markets and States: The History of Economic Thought Since 1750”
Senior Thesis:

Hate the Players or Hate the Game? Process Innovation in Western Europe

Descriptive Paragraph:

I am interested in studying the rise in populism in Western Europe and the United States, on both the left- and right-wing sides of the ideological spectrum, and I hope to answer the question of what factors can be attributed to this current populist backlash. On the economic side, I hope to explore the roles that globalization, automation, and the rise of the knowledge economy play in this shift in voting behavior, and on the sociocultural front, I hope to investigate how post-material values like immigration and environmentalism have also impacted party support. For my thesis, I hope to apply the methods of political economy to understand one aspect in particular: how the political economy of electoral systems incentivizes some populist leaders to introduce experimental processes for conducting politics (political methodologies that are unconventional, disruptive, and anti-institutional, like e-democracy). This question matters to me academically because, while many have debated the sources attributed to the rise in political dissent, I hope to bring light to how aspects of the political structure affect the rise in populism.

3. Technology and the Future of Work

Courses:

History 1067, “The History of Economic Thought”
Government 1433, “Tech Science: From Democracy to Technocracy and Back”
Ethical Reasoning 41, “Economic Justice”
Sociology 1112, “Men, Women, and Work”

Senior Thesis:

Just Employment: Redistribution, Recognition, and the Future of Work

Descriptive Paragraph:

Emerging technologies are not only transforming the processes by which we create products and services in our economy, but are also posing a challenge to the meaning of work itself. Breakthroughs in automation and artificial intelligence are already affecting work and the workforce and promise to have large-scale impacts in the next decade. Given this context of the changing nature of work and employment, I will investigate different conceptual ways of situating labor, work, and leisure within an account of justice. Of particular interest to me is examining the relationship between work and its non-economic rewards, insofar as full-time employment grants individuals access to rights, recognition, status, belonging, and a sense of identity in society.
4. State Violence and Identity in Latin America

Courses

History 1914, “Dirty Wars, Peace Processes, and the Politics of History in Latin America”
Government 1295, “Comparative Politics in Latin America”
Spanish 70, “Introduction to Latin American Studies: Modernity, Culture, and Politics”
History 1032, “History of Brazil”
History 1937, “Social Revolutions in Latin America”

Senior Thesis

*Beyond the “Plaza”: Women’s Experiences Under and Responses to Argentina’s Proceso de Reorganizacion Nacional, 1976-1983*

Descriptive Paragraph

My focus field examines identity formation under authoritarian regimes in Latin America. As opposed to focusing on the politics and history of state violence, I am interested in the experiences of people who lived through the authoritarian regimes of the late 20th century. This broad interest encompasses the experiences of not only revolutionaries and dictators, but also so-called normal people who carried out the activities of everyday life under authoritarian rule. Some specific questions that interest me include why people in Latin America struggle to agree on even the most basic truths about what happened during periods of military rule as well as how identities such as gender and urbanity intersect with political realities. In answering these questions, I hope to build an anthropological and historical framework for understanding life under Latin American military rule. More broadly, I hope to understand how both intrastate and extra state violence affect people at the individual level.

5. Ethnic Conflict in the Middle East (Joint with NELC, Studied Abroad)

Courses:

History 12J: “Reformers and Revolutionaries in the Arab World”
History 1009, “The Making of the Modern Middle East”
Government 94MC, “Peacebuilding: Approaches to Reducing Ethno-Religious Conflict”
Study Abroad at Jesus College, Cambridge, “Lebanese Political and Economic Development: From Post-Civil War to the Present”

Senior Thesis:

*All of Them Means All of Them: A Model for Opposition Movements in Lebanon*
6. Race and Criminalization in American Education

Courses:

African and African American Studies 123X, “Mass Incarceration in Historical Perspective”
Sociology 1135, “Education and Culture”
Sociology 1171, “Crime and Order in the American City”
Gen Ed 1076, “Equity and Excellence in American Education”
Government 1033, “Educational Justice”
EDU A 404, “The History of African American Education”

Senior Thesis:

On Edge: School Security, Students’ Sense of Safety, and Academic Achievement in the Washington, DC Public Schools

7. Interwar Continental Social Theory

Courses:

History 1323, “German Social Thought: Nietzsche to Habermas”
Philosophy 34, “Existentialism in Literature and Film”
German 264, “The Frankfurt School”
History 1324, “French Social Thought”

Senior Thesis:

Horkheimer’s Critical Theory and Empirical Research

8. Popular Culture in Contemporary China (Joint Concentrator with EAS)

Courses:

History of Science 183, “Engineering East Asia”
Government 94GS, “Globalization and Civil Society”
Anthropology 2727, “Anthropology of Media”
African and African American Studies 142, “Hip Hop and Don’t Stop”
DPI 450, “The Political Economy of Transition in China”

Senior Thesis:

What is Real? What is Fake? Transitional Chinese Hip-Hop Culture and the War of Authenticity
9. Conflict and Justice in Sub-Saharan Africa

Courses:

History 1903, “How Societies Remember and Forget”
History 14E, “The Cold War in the Global South”
Government 94GY, “Transnational Justice and the Politics of Truth Commissions”
IGA 105, “The Politics of International Law”

Senior Thesis:

*Between Myth and Memory: History Education and the Making of Post-Genocide Rwanda*

10. Law and Inequality in the United States (Studied Abroad)

Courses:

History 1038, “Debating Capitalism”
Anthropology 1683, “The City Jail: Race and Incarceration”
Sociology 182, “Law and Society”
Study Abroad at Jesus College, Cambridge, “The Penalization of Poverty in the West”
Study Abroad at Jesus College, Cambridge, “Inequality in the US and the UK”

Senior Thesis:

*You Can’t Squeeze Blood Out of a Turnip: Understanding Homeless Courts in the Age of Penalizing Poverty*

11. The Political Philosophy of Democracy and Inequality

Courses:

History 1457, “The History of American Capitalism”
Philosophy 178Z, “Inequality”
Philosophy 279, “Topics in Political Philosophy”
Government 94SAF, “Safra Undergraduate Ethics Seminar”
Government 2071, “Democratic Theory”

Senior Thesis:

*Powerful Non-State Actors and the Scope of Justice*
12. History, Politics, and Global Health Inequality (Joint Concentrator with History of Science)

Courses:

History 1931, “Slavery, Disease, and Race: Brazil in the Atlantic World”
African and African American Studies 197, “Poverty, Race, and Health”
Societies of the World 47, “Contemporary Developing Countries: Solutions to Intractable Problems”
Government 1263, “Improving Governance in Developing Countries”

Senior Thesis:

Et tu, Brazil? Evaluating the Historical and Present-Day Relationships Between Inequality and Urban Health Disparities in Brazil, from Colonial Times to COVID-19