“The Ethics of Addiction”  
Jennifer Baker, Philosophy Department

Addiction poses an incredible challenge for ethical theory. What questions are off the table? Are we responsible for our addictions? Is addiction a vice? Are we responsible for our children’s addictions? Are addicts responsible for their behaviors while addicted? Is moral fortitude required for recover from addiction? Do moral behaviors stave off addiction? What is the role of shame? This course will be focused on coming to understand addiction in ethical terms. Preliminary work will include coming to recognize the history and social responses to addiction; spelling out how we currently assess addiction in ethical terms; and coming to understand the most recent research on addiction and how it overturns old models such as the “disease” model. This class will provide you an opportunity to research a topic that may be relevant to later work in any number of fields.

“From the Holy to the Mundane: Myth, Ritual and Symbol”  
John Huddlestun, Religious Studies Department

Drawing from the vast literature in religious studies, anthropology (cultural and symbolic), and sociology, the course addresses a number of questions and concerns across a range of religious, social, and political situations. Do myths, rituals and symbols reflect reality, or create it? Do (or must) myths or symbols have universal meaning? What is the relationship between myth and ritual? Must one precede the other? Do rituals simply reflect one’s belief or worldview or do they create it? What is the place of myth, ritual, and symbol in human social and political life? What about “secular” rituals or rituals that are performed incorrectly or fail? How would one determine (or who would determine) that a ritual had failed? Following a reading of some influential figures and selected responses to their work, this class will focus on a number of theoretical issues relating especially to ritual, and on how myth, ritual, and symbol are created, used (or abused), revised, reinvented and given authority in modern life (e.g., birth, death, circumcision, abortion, political contexts, etc.) and ways in which they legitimate or reinforce existing religious and socio-political institutions.

“Neuroscience, Self, and Society”  
Thomas Nadelhoffer, Philosophy Department

In recent decades neuroscientists have made progress toward understanding the neural bases of human behavior. As this progress continues, neuroscience becomes increasingly relevant to a number of real-world endeavors that involve understanding, predicting and changing human behavior. This class will examine the ways in which neuroscience is being applied in law, criminal justice, education, economics and business. For each application area it will briefly
review those aspects of the basic brain science that are most relevant, and then study the application in more detail. The goal of this course is to help students (a) develop their analytical reasoning skills so that they have the tools needed to critically evaluate both scientific evidence and philosophical (or even political) argumentation; (b) develop their ability to conduct research and then speak across and within disciplines; (c) develop their ability to both think and write clearly and persuasively, and (d) develop their appreciation for the importance of interdisciplinarity. Whether the issue is neuroscience and free will, the problem of animal minds, or the acceptability of pediatric neuroenhancement—i.e., whether parents (or even governments) should have the right to “enhance” their children — this class will consider each issue from as many vantage points as possible.

“Digital Humanities Project: Biutiful Barcelona”
Benjamin Fraser, Hispanic Studies
This class will get you thinking about culture and urban space in one of Europe’s most cosmopolitan cities. The first part of the course crosses the lines of film studies, literary studies and urban geography. The historical thread running through the films and novels brings a number of events into clear focus: the Cerda urban plan of 1859 that reconstructed key parts of the city center and broadened the streets to facilitate the circulation of traffic, the World Fairs of 1888 and 1929 in Barcelona, the transitional years of the late Spanish dictatorship, the Olympic Games in 1992, and increasing European immigration in recent years. The course will emphasize these events and spark discussion of modernization, urbanization, urban renewal, the relationship between culture and politics in cities, and the power implicit in representing history. The second half of the class will be a collaborative Digital Humanities project. Students will record their own analyses of the films/novels discussed and actually embed these cultural analyses on a geographical representation of Barcelona’s urban streets.

Bill Manaris, Computer Science Department and Yiorgos Vassilandonakis, Music Department
This course combines computer programming with applied music composition skills developed in tandem from the ground up, within the context of designing music projects conceived, realized, and performed on a laptop. Students apply principles of sonic design and computer programming towards building interactive computer music environments in a team-based, project-driven exploration of Python programming, time-based structures, algorithmic processes, soundscapes, graphical user interfaces, musical language, and style.