Alumnae College 2012
May 18, 2012

Alumnae College will feature classes organized around Smith’s academic concentrations, which provide students with opportunities to combine intellectual and practical experiences around a specific area of interest. The concentrations include:

Archives makes our histories public through research projects and professional training.

Biomathematical Sciences integrates the study of mathematics, statistics, computer science, and engineering with biology, biochemistry, and neuroscience.

Book Studies connects students to the exceptional resources of the Mortimer Rare Book Room and the breadth of knowledge of area book artists and craftspeople.

Buddhist Studies builds on Smith’s unusual depth and strength in this area of study.

Environmental Concentration in Sustainable Food integrates knowledge in support of environmental decisions and actions.

Museums provides a foundation in the history of museums and the critical issues they face.

Poetry allows students to pursue work on and about poetry through a range of experiences and courses.

South Asia brings together different areas of study with a specific focus on South Asia.

Community Engagement and Social Change connects students’ interdisciplinary studies to practical work.

REGISTRATION
8:30–9 a.m.
Seelye Hall

SESSION I
9–10:30 a.m.

OPTION A
Art and Identity in Colonial India
Nalini Bhushan, Professor, Philosophy
This session will explore the tension between national and artistic identity in colonial India (1857–1947). With a special focus on three artists—Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, and Amrita Sher-Gil—we will review the public’s response to their work and come to understand the complex network of reasons and emotional attitudes that allowed each to be justifiably viewed as a great Indian artist. We’ll pay particular attention to the work of Amrita Sher-Gil, arguably the greatest woman artist in colonial India, discovering how she has crafted a genuinely feminist sensibility despite her insistent refusal to be labeled as such.

OPTION B
Collecting 101 (limited to 15 students)
Jessica Nicoll ’83, Director and Louise Ines Doyle ’34 Chief Curator, Smith College Museum of Art; and Aprile Gallant, Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs
This class introduces you to the issues and practical matters of collecting for a museum. We will meet in the museum’s Cunningham Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs for a look at some recent acquisitions and how SCMA plans for the development of its collection.

OPTION C
Biomathematics
Robert Dorit, Professor, Biology
The twenty-first century will be, without doubt, the century of the life sciences. Already, there have been some major achievements, many of which flow from our newfound ability to acquire vast amounts of data cheaply and quickly. But we’re still lagging in our ability to extract value from this flood of data, partly because our existing analytic tools are out of date. The complex problems we seek to understand—from global warming to the origin of consciousness—will require the development of new mathematical and computational tools. This session will explore some of these exciting problems, the accompanying challenges, and the ways in which undergraduate education is being reshaped to address them.

OPTION D
“You’re History”: Women in the Archives
Susan Van Dyne, Professor, Program for the Study of Women and Gender; Director, Archives Concentration
The Sophia Smith Collection and the Smith College Archives together represent the largest collection of women’s history materials and the oldest women’s archives in the United States. This session introduces you to some of the women who made history in great and small ways. We’ll sample from a few courses based in the archives, gain an overview of the innovative Archives Concentration that combines research in the archives with practical career exploration, and share a hands-on look at the fascinating artifacts that make up our shared history. If you have a taste for reading other people’s mail, sleuthing the stories that scrapbooks can tell, or considering the legacies of dedicated women who worked for social justice in many forms, then this class is for you.

OPTION E
How Poems Mean
Ellen Doré Watson, Director, Poetry Center
Why don’t poems rhyme anymore? Why are contemporary poems so “difficult”? In this class, we will consider poems not as locked boxes to be cracked open, but as little worlds to enter. We’ll take a quick look at the spectrum of contemporary poetic modes, and then we’ll look at some poems closely, exploring how they direct us to move through them in different ways. Why are poems set down on the page as they are? If they don’t rhyme, what other kinds of music do they make, as they create shapes of meaning in our heads and hearts?

OPTION F
Buddhism
Jamie Hubbard, Professor and Yehan Numata Professor in Buddhist Studies
Most people think of Buddhism as a practical spirituality that focuses on meditation in order to achieve a transcendent experience of awakening. In this practical approach, words and concepts are silenced in favor of pure experience. What about the guiding words of the Buddha
and his awakened followers? Are these also to be jettisoned? In this class, we will look at the Buddhist approach to scripture, its preservation and transmission, and the role that it plays in the Buddhist tradition as well as the academic study of Buddhism.

OPTION G
Can Florida Everglades Restoration and Sugar Farming Coexist?
Paul Wetzel, Co-director, the Environmental Concentration in Sustainable Food and the Environmental Monitoring Coordinator for the MacLeish Field Station

The twentieth century, half of the Everglades area was converted to agriculture and urban uses, producing about $1 billion worth of sugar, vegetables, sod, and rice each year. This—and other large-scale water diversion projects—has led to the largest and most expensive ecosystem restoration effort in the world. Is restoration of the Everglades possible or even desirable? Who are the stakeholders in the restoration project? What is the future of agriculture in the Everglades? This course will explore these questions and others to provide participants with the big picture of Everglades restoration. We will also use Everglades restoration as an example of the importance of training future decision makers to be multidisciplinary in their understanding and skilled at synthesizing information.

SESSION II
11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

OPTION H
The Art and History of the Book: a New Concentration at Smith College (limited to 15 participants)
Martin Antonetti, Curator, Mortimer Rare Book Room

LOCATION: Mortimer Rare Book Room

The rare book room in Neilson Library is an active "lab" for the study of material culture and the history of the book. For decades the Mortimer Rare Book Room has been allied with the college’s curriculum and, as a result, it has always been heavily used by students and faculty from all departments. Now, with the advent of the Book Studies Concentration, and with our first cadre of enthusiastic concentrators, the energy level has risen dramatically. In this class, curator Martin Antonetti will discuss why a curriculum in book studies is so relevant in today’s increasingly digital world. As part of his presentation, Antonetti will show examples of the kinds of information—beyond a book’s content—that the study of the physical object can reveal.

OPTION I
Technical Art History (limited to 15 participants)
David Dempsey, Associate Director for Museum Services, Smith College Museum of Art

Looking at artworks from the Smith College Museum of Art’s collection through the lens of both science and history, this session will explore how our understanding of art history is enhanced by technical study of artists’ methods and materials.

OPTION J
Biomathematics
Robert Dorit, Professor, Biology

OPTION K
“You’re History”: Women in the Archives
Susan Van Dyne, Professor, Program for the Study of Women and Gender; Director, Archives Concentration

OPTION L
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OPTION M
Buddhism
Jamie Hubbard, Professor and Yehan Numata Professor in Buddhist Studies

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OPTION O
Nation, Migration, Transnationalism: Contemporary South Asian English Fiction
Ambreen Hai, Associate Professor, English Language and Literature

LUNCH & PRESENTATION
12:45 p.m.

Freestyle: My Journey through Culture, Community, and Contemporary Art
Thelma Golden ’87, Director and Chief Curator, The Studio Museum in Harlem

Throughout a twenty-five-year career that has involved working with significant contemporary artists and organizing groundbreaking exhibitions, Thelma Golden ’87 has witnessed—and sometimes led—the transformative shifts in contemporary art as they mirrored changes in culture and society. Her talk will explore her path and journey as a curator from Smith to the present, providing a glimpse at how art can shape culture and community.