

# Undergraduate Catalog of Courses

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Volume 2017 2017-2018

Article 38

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2017

## January Term

Saint Mary's College of California

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### Recommended Citation

Saint Mary's College of California (2017) "January Term," *Undergraduate Catalog of Courses*: Vol. 2017 , Article 38.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/undergraduate-catalog/vol2017/iss1/38>

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### **JANUARY TERM**

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The faculty of January Term is drawn from all departments of the college and the broader academic community.

January Term provides both students and faculty a unique opportunity to explore courses and experiences that depart from the constraints of the regular semester; both students and faculty are freed from their disciplinary constraints to create new and innovative academic experiences.

January Term offers both on-campus courses and off-campus travel courses throughout the United States and to many parts of the globe (some scholarships are available to defray travel costs for eligible students).

Providing the same academic rigor and credit as the fall and spring terms, many January Term courses also emphasize experiential learning through service, community-based research and on-site learning relevant to the region.

January Term is a unique Saint Mary's program that showcases intensive courses of study: since students enroll in only one course per January Term, faculty members expect more and tend to increase the pace of instruction, as well as requiring broader reading, more reflection and careful writing, more thorough class preparation and greater individual initiative.

Four January Term courses are required of most students; transfer students are required to take one January Term course for each year of full-time academic residency.

#### **JANUARY TERM COMMITTEE**

David Bird, *World Languages and Cultures*,  
*Interim Director*

Carla Bossard, *Biology*

Rebecca Carroll, *Management & Entrepreneurship*

Paul Giurlanda, *Theology & Religious Studies*

Emily Hause-Brooks, *Psychology*

Norris Palmer, *Kinesiology, Theology & Religious Studies*

Claire Williams, *Kinesiology*

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#### **SAMPLE COURSES**

*(actual courses vary every year)*

##### **ON CAMPUS:**

##### **JAN 020 Precious Watersheds**

*(designated as a service-learning course)*

Water is essential for life. Civilization is dependent on having sufficient quantities of high quality water. Waterfalls and rushing rivers impart sensations of enjoyment and fulfill our spirits. Water is used in formal spiritual ceremonies, and thus is also a cultural necessity. Yet, water can also be evaluated as a critical commodity for economic sustainability. In California, the war over water rights led to a stronger national environmental movement with the landmark case to preserve Mono Lake. This course will focus on what our individual and societal responsibilities are with respect to maintaining watersheds. The readings will set up a foundation for discussion and classroom activities. The curriculum will be organized so students can gain some level of expertise and then utilize their skills to inform others. The weekly planned field trip will require an additional afternoon time commitment and will be set on Thursday afternoons (including the first week of Jan term). This is in addition to the treks during class to our on-campus seasonal wetland, the Saint Mary's College Swamp (formerly Lake La Salle). The service learning component of this class will have three parts: 1) creating some media materials for a community/civic organization and documenting this task; 2) planning educational materials for the web resource; and 3) performing educational outreach work. A team presentation on a specific issue will occur in the last week as a part of the web materials aspect of the course.

**JAN 035 If You Cross the Border, What is the Law Which Governs Your Conduct? – A Neophyte’s Look at Public and Private International Law**

“The world is flat,” says New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. Maybe, but countries still have borders. Borders represent the jealous protection of the customs, mores, religion, and laws of each country’s peoples. Crossing borders invites a duty of respect and compliance. But in this globalized world, whose law applies to exchanges among this family of nations or to citizens in transit or to international commercial transactions?

Concepts such as “crimes against humanity” were used post-World War Two to prosecute Nazi leaders and the war leaders of Japan. Who had the authority to make such laws, especially after the wrongful acts had already been committed? Who has the power to prosecute Balkan Serb leaders for their acts against indigenous Muslims and again in the prosecution of the tyrants of Rwanda.

The United Nations, the European Economic Union, NATO, the World Trade Organization and the like come about following the principles of public international law—the stuff of diplomats. But what about the alleged environmental wrong doings of Texaco in Ecuador? Should Chevron, who purchased Texaco after the alleged spills, be liable? To whom? Who should decide... Ecuador courts or U.S. courts?

Nation-to-nation public international law has a long history from which certain principles have become accepted practice. The same is not true for law governing conduct of individuals or trans-national commercial activities. This course introduces participants to the fascinating and complex world of public and private international law, the glue which brings certainty to the cross-border activities of globalization.

**JAN 057 Borders and Blue Shirts**

Offering perspectives from a remarkable variety of guests—including prosecutors, defense lawyers, a former warden of San Quentin State Prison, a retired prison guard, a correctional educational counselor, a parole officer and a convicted felon—this course engages the California prison system in an objective study and directs students to imagine and design a system that critically addresses the many challenges endemic to the current correctional system.

**JAN 120 Nightmare Futures**

*(designated as a social justice course)*

*“I don’t try to describe the future. I try to prevent it.”*

– Ray Bradbury

Since time immemorial people must have been dreaming of the ideal and just society — or even simply the better society. In 1516 an Englishman named Thomas More gave a name to this vision of an ideal or just society—“Utopia”—and the name stuck. In Greek Utopia means “No-Place” and, by virtue of a pun, “Good-Place.” It was left to the twentieth century to translate utopian principles into reality in a really grand way and then to discover their unintended consequences. As Tom Wolfe has observed, the twentieth century was the great age of utopian impulses, with one utopian scheme after another being attempted, each one trying to “go back to zero,” to begin again, and to remake humankind. Our central concern will be the literary response to the twentieth century’s Utopian urge.

Science fiction works by projecting trends into the future or imagining possibilities realized in the future. But that part of science fiction that is called dystopian follows Bradbury’s formula. Dystopias are “Bad-Places,” bad futures that seem to be implied by current trends. Anti-Utopias, a subset of Dystopias, are utopias which turn out to be, in practice, “Bad-Places,” the evil and oppressive consequences of someone else’s utopian dream. We will begin with Sir/St. Thomas More’s original, Utopia, and then examine 20th-century responses to the utopian impulse. We will also consider the utopian aspirations of modern totalitarian movements, from the Bolsheviks to the Khmer Rouge.

### **JAN 147 The Copernican Revolution and the Galileo Affair**

This course is a multi-disciplinary investigation into two closely related historical episodes: the triumph of Copernicus's heliocentric system, and the famous trial and condemnation of Galileo. The "Galileo affair" is one of the most symbolic and hotly contested episodes in history, and debates about its proper interpretation continue today. This is the case not just because it is the poster child for conflict between religion and science, but also because of the challenging questions about scientific development that the Copernican revolution raises. The class will start with an intensive survey of astronomical and cosmological theories leading up to and including Copernicus. We will read extensively from Galileo's astronomical treatises, from the documents relating to his trial, and from various writers seeking to establish what happened and what lessons the affair holds. Along the way we will reflect on the relationship between faith and reason, authority and inquiry, religion and science, and try to understand more fully the process of scientific development and intellectual revolution. The course is intensive and the reading load is significant.

Classes will vary between lecture, group work, and seminar discussions. A central project of the class will be the preparation, and carrying out, of an in-class debate, in which students articulate and defend positions on behalf of Galileo or his accusers. There will be two major written assignments: an interpretative, text-based paper and a final research paper, in which each student will analyze a contemporary argument or position responding to the Galileo affair.

## TRAVEL

### **JAN 170 SMC Kilimanjaro: Crossing Tanzania**

*(designated as a social justice and a service-learning course)*

Using a Problem-Posing Documentary Studies approach, students will produce multimedia projects while they also perform development work in under-resourced communities of Tanzania. Students will cover five specific areas of study: 1) Documentary Studies, 2) Problem-Posing Pedagogy, 3) Multimedia Production, 4) Aid and Development, and 5) elementary Swahili language. We will participate in low-level construction projects as well as water and sanitation work in outlying areas. Along with the academic content of the course come other direct responsibilities, including daily chores to maintain our mobile development unit, team responsibilities, and health and nutrition work with our own group and with children in our host country. In addition to our development work, we will take a group excursion in the form of a three-day safari in the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater.

### **JAN 171 Crops, Cash, and Crossing Borders: Food Justice in Nicaragua**

*(designated as a social justice and a service-learning course)*

We all need food to survive, but in a world dependent on an increasingly globalized food system, most of us are alienated from the food we consume. This course will examine the impact of our global food system by exploring the struggle for food justice and sovereignty in Nicaragua. As the second-poorest country in the Western hemisphere, Nicaragua has endured many difficulties and upheavals, including foreign intervention, revolution, and devastating natural disasters. We will explore the history of Nicaragua, looking in particular at its relationship with the United States, as well as the role of this relationship on food issues in Nicaragua. From there, we will examine current food justice principles and practices in Nicaragua, especially in relation to the local-global tension between self-sufficient food production and the production of "cash crops" like coffee and cocoa. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of these issues, students will spend several days living with rural farmers and their families as we help in the coffee harvest, and we'll get a crash course in organic farming on the bird-friendly Gaia Estate. We will also learn how chocolate is made, hear from survivors of pesticide poisoning in the banana trade, and tour socially responsible sugar and dried fruit factories. Our adventure will even include visiting a famous volcano and time on a gorgeous beach relaxing and reflecting on our experiences. Embodying the Jan Term theme of "crossing borders" in numerous ways, this course will change the way you see the world!