

urban academy course catalogue ~ spring 2002



About Men and Women II - The Sequel

What's this relationship thing about? How do you choose your friends and romantic partners? Could it have anything to do with your family relationships? Why are you attracted to this person but not that one?

What are the responsibilities of a friend? Romantic partner? Son? Daughter? How do those people you love know they are loved? What is love anyway?

We will explore these questions and more through readings, discussion, interviews and writing. Be prepared to reflect and discuss.

REQUIREMENT: You have passed **About Men and Women** or have permission from the teacher.

Adaptations

In this literature and criticism course we will read short stories and novels and critique the films that were adapted from them. Do good books make good movies? If you read the book first, does that ruin the film? How much can a filmmaker change a story and still stay true to an author's original idea? We will explore these questions and others to arrive at a deeper understanding of the relationship between literature and film.

Advanced Beginner Spanish

In this class we will build on the *basic* skills of comprehension, conjugation and verb tenses that we covered in beginner Spanish. Throughout the semester, we will concentrate on making ourselves understood in the spoken and written form of the language even if we lack a few words and expressions. We will read and translate text from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. We will watch Spanish television programs and movies. We will learn words and words and words. Beginner Spanish is not a pre-requisite for this course, but talk to the teacher during registration if you have any questions.

Algebra 1

This class introduces you to the basic concepts of algebra: solving equations, graphing and slopes, order of operations, signed (directed) numbers, exponents and roots. Solving problems and playing games are the basic procedures of the class, and you'll work mainly in small groups. Your job will be to figure out and explain how you did it. There will be regular homework and period quizzes and tests.

Algebra 2

Material This class is a continuation of Algebra 1 and will cover: Distributive Law, factoring, 2 by 2 equations, coordinate geometry, exponents and roots, nth terms, the quadratic formula, patterns, symbolic equations and graphing.

Method Puzzles and playing games. You will work mainly in small groups. Your job is to "figure out and explain." There will be regular homework, closed book quizzes and two open book tests.

American History

This course will explore the meaning of freedom and democracy by investigating how different groups of people defined these terms during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods of U.S. history. We will pay particular attention to the arguments that historians have had over who or what was responsible for the end of slavery, the extent to which former slaves and other "ordinary" people were capable of taking responsibility for their own lives after the Civil War, and

the relative contributions of the leaders and the masses in shaping the nation's social, economic, and political system.

We will pursue these issues by reading conflicting historical interpretations of events during this period of history, exchanging our own ideas about them, exploring evidence that relates to these ideas, and writing papers that analyze the disagreement surrounding the interpretations and ideas we consider.

Ancient History and Religion

You will be exposed to different aspects of ancient civilizations: religions, puzzles, languages, astronomy, number systems, laws, art, history, and geography. For instance, you may learn to write your name in Egyptian, Greek and Hebrew; count as the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Chinese, Hebrews and Mayans did.

After an introduction to some of these ancient civilizations, you will select one aspect of study in depth. You will have a series of assignments that will help you develop your research and writing skills and prepare for a final project (both written and oral). You will also learn how to construct a map and develop a timeline for the civilization you choose to study.

We will visit museums, libraries, and bookstores to conduct our research. We will also interview experts, consult the Internet, and practice evaluating sources.

To take this class, you must be prepared to do independent research and meet deadlines. Your final paper may meet the requirements for the social studies prerequisite/proficiency. Students who have taken ancient history before may retake the course.

Ancient India

In this class, we will act as historians studying ancient India. We will decide among other issues, whether society in ancient India was "civilized," what roles men and women played in society and how religion developed. To conduct our study, we will visit museums, libraries, temples and Indian neighborhoods. We will also review some of the ancient texts, watch films and interview scholars. Towards the end of the semester, we will look at what ancient traditions continue to survive in India today.

For your course work in this class, you will keep a journal to record your findings and you will write a final paper based upon your research.

Autobiography Writing Workshop

This course is a writing workshop. During the semester you'll be deciding what your most important memories are and working on three autobiographical stories. Small groups of students will work together reading and giving feedback to you on your drafts.

You will also read excerpts from the autobiographies of a variety of people. You'll examine the way that people represent their childhoods and teenage years. How do people tell the stories from their youth? What do they choose to tell and what do they leave out?

Basic Repair and Maintenance

This course will investigate the scientific method of repairing and maintaining simple and complex structures. We will assess a problem; plan an approach; complete a repair; and then evaluate what we have done. Basic principles of physics will be explored as applicable. Classroom activities will provide students with the skills to use the tools necessary for maintenance and repair. Out-of-class activities may include field research at various locations.

The first section will utilize a common bicycle as a means through which the student will apply the scientific method to repair and maintain. Additional sections will be based on input from students. Homework may include selected readings, interviewing experts and repair projects.

Ceramics

Clay is a magical material that can be shaped into almost any form.

In this class you will learn ceramic techniques that have been used for thousands of years: coil-building, slab-building, and sculpting. You will learn how to design and develop forms and how to decorate them. Just as importantly, you will learn how to evaluate your progress and develop ways of problem solving.

The emphasis of this class is for you to be able to transform your ideas and feelings into a three-dimensional project.

Chemical Puzzles

Labels have fallen off several bottles each containing different solutions of chemicals. How do you find out which solution is in which bottle?

You're given a test tube containing a solution. How do you find out what it is? How do you find out if it's a solution of a single chemical or a mixture of several chemicals?

These are some of the puzzles students will try to solve by designing and carrying out appropriate experiments. Each student will be required to record observations and data collected in the laboratory notebooks. Class time will also be spent on analyzing experimental results. Students will be expected to become familiar with the chemists' shorthand of writing formulas and reactions.

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- * ability to work independently or in small groups
- * quality of laboratory notebooks
- * quality of written assignments

One major project will be to identify a series of "unknowns".

Computer Programming, Introduction

Sure computers are great at doing math problems. They help us to type our papers, keep our phone books organized and let us get onto the Internet. But what we really like to do with computers is play games! In this course, we will work on programming computers to do just that.

This course will be an introduction to the Java programming language. In it we will cover the math concepts that help us to get those pictures up onto the screen. This is a math course that will cover coordinate geometry. You must have passed Algebra 1 with at least an 80 or get the recommendation of the teacher to be in this class.

Constitutional Law

Should Native Americans be allowed to smoke peyote - a controlled substance - for religious reasons? Should the Boy Scouts be allowed to dismiss a gay scout leader? Do grandparents have a right to visit their grandchildren? Can a student lead a prayer before a high school football game? What do these questions have in common?

These are all issues of constitutional law decided by the United States Supreme Court, and they all affect your individual rights. In this class we will examine several constitutional questions by reading Supreme Court cases, by talking to lawyers and other legal experts and by arguing about the cases in class. We will also pick a case the Court will be hearing this term, read related cases, and then travel to Washington, D.C. to hear oral arguments in the case.

All students will be expected to function as lawyers (writing briefs and arguing cases) and judges (asking oral argument questions and writing opinions) during the class.

Fitness

In this class we will try to develop a fitness regimen that combines elements of weight training, aerobics, cardiovascular and stretching. In order to facilitate these things we will take advantage of the facilities in and around the building. This will include using the steps, the gym (when available) and the weight room. When the weather permits, we will go hiking, walking and jogging in the park.

Students will work on developing a fitness routine for themselves and will be expected to share their workout routine with the rest of the group.

From a Sketch to a Sculpture

This art course will be broken into two main sections. In the first part of the semester you will focus on refining sketching skills and gathering a book of visual concepts and ideas. You will have daily drawing assignments that will focus on different elements of art techniques. We will sketch from observation inside museums and public spaces. You will also sketch from your imagination. In the second part of the semester you will create a large-scale project which develops the images and ideas from your sketchbook into a three dimensional work of art.

Frontiers and Borderlands: Researching the History of the American West

What's so special about America? Many believe that America is a unique country whose strength is based on a tradition of democracy - a democracy that stemmed from the endless possibilities allowed by westward expansion. Is there truth in this? In this course we will contrast the images of John Wayne-style cowboys with the stories of the Black Buffalo soldiers, gun-toting frontier women and savvy Native Americans who fought and negotiated with the new arrivals. We will also look at the history from the perspective of non-whites like the Mexicans who lived in or near what they called "El Norte" and the Chinese immigrants who traveled east to journey to "Gold Mountain."

We will attempt to separate the myths that impelled and grew out of westward expansion from the truth. Through readings, discussions, and library research we will arrive at a more accurate picture of the American West, its place in history, and in the American imagination. We will view movies, artwork and websites connected with this subject, as well as visit the library on a regular basis to complete research on a student-chosen topic related to the frontier.

Geometry

This class will look at angles and shape relationships of all sorts from theoretical and practical viewpoints. You will look for patterns, systems and structures in the material, do group proofs and devise practical ways of measurement in class and out of class. We will also try some logic proofs.

Students will work mainly in small groups and there will be regular homework, puzzles, small group projects and periodic quizzes.

Prerequisite: Teacher recommendation.

Global Women's Studies

Have women experienced common histories regardless of the time period and place in which they've lived? How do women and men view the opposite sex in different societies around the world and what are the factors that influence this? Do women have a better quality of life in certain countries or is it unfair for outsiders to judge how another society defines its gender roles? In this course we will examine some of the key issues that past and present women encounter. We will read fictional and non-fictional historical accounts written about women from different countries, religious backgrounds and social classes, as well as watch films and conduct interviews in order to gain an understanding of the complexity and variety of women's lives worldwide.

Harlem and Beyond: I Am A Man

The words "I Am A Man" appeared on protest signs made by the striking sanitation workers that Martin Luther King, Jr. was working with in the weeks before his assassination. What do they mean? How is the struggle for a better life in America connected to our definition of what it means to be a "man" or a mature, successful human being of either gender? How does historical change affect the way people define themselves and their goals?

This course will explore these questions by examining the history or current situation of Harlem and other New York communities that are experiencing notable change. As part of its investigation it will conduct regular interviews of individuals whose lives have been affected by these changes in one way or another. The people we interview will be of many different ages and come from many different backgrounds. In addition to talking about the history and politics of the community, they will discuss the more personal developments that have shaped their views and made them the person they are today.

This class will require a considerable amount of reading, writing and interviewing. Much of the research and interviewing will be done outside of the school building and will involve being with the class once and sometimes twice a week until 4:30 PM. Do not sign up unless you are willing to make this kind of commitment.

Heat

What is heat? Over the last 300 years, that question has led scientists to the intersection of chemistry and physics. In this hands-on science class, we will investigate the nature of heat. Expect to design and conduct experiments and write formal papers. Recommendation of the math department is required.

Horticulture, Independent Study

In this class you will be given the opportunity to develop and carry out your own science experiment in horticulture. Significant research, measurement, and analysis of your research are required. Only those of you who have taken previous horticulture classes will be considered.

Hydroponics

Fruits, vegetables and herbs are increasingly being grown hydroponically. Instead of growing plants in a soil-based medium, the roots are allowed to draw their nutrients from a water solution of nutrients. In this class you will be setting up a hydroponic system: choosing the plants, the medium, the nutrient solution. There will be significant reading, record keeping, and measurement required. The willingness to work in a group is essential.

Jogo Bonito ("The Beautiful Game")

What sport is played and watched by more people than any other in the world? That's right, it's...soccer! Referred to by the Brazilians as "the beautiful game," soccer involves skill, balance, creative flair, strength and endurance. In this class we will learn the basics of the game and train as footballers do. This will mean getting into shape. Eventually we will be scrimmaging at least once a week. We will also watch soccer to learn from the pros, including in June, matches from the World Cup, the most watched sporting event in the world.

Just Bill

Suppose Shakespeare wasn't "Shakespeare" but just Bill, an actor of the late 16th century who wrote a collection of popular (though unpublished) plays and was clever at making a comfortable living from show biz. Would people still find his work extraordinary today? Would you?

We'll examine Bill's work from a number of perspectives to explore the best way to approach his plays. We'll read them, attend them, view them, perform in them, and adapt them. We'll study the playwright and his times. Students will write a series of papers examining the Just Bill experience and evaluating his worth for the next century's patrons of the theatre. We'll cover the sonnets, a tragedy (maybe *Hamlet* or *King Lear*), a comedy, and if there's time, a history. Be prepared to spend one or two evenings at the theatre to see how others have interpreted Bill's work.

Large Scale Drawing

This class will concentrate on drawing techniques using very basic materials including pencil, pen, charcoal and paper...LARGE paper. We will focus on shading, lighting and details as we explore objects, figures and landscapes in larger than life scale. We will work with large sketchbooks and work towards a final Drawing series.

Literacy Period

This period is a time when each student will work on the skills that he or she thinks will be most valuable to him or her. Each of these classes, in its own unique way, will be attempting to find an enjoyable approach to supporting skills development.

- * Boggle
- * Choral Reading
- * Crosswords
- * Grammar Doctor
- * Logic Puzzles
- * Mini-Mysteries
- * Read-a-Book
- * Read-a-Newspaper
- * Reading Children's Books
- * Reading Plays Aloud
- * Research Games in the JREC library
- * SAT 2
- * Word Games

Little Big Books

In this literature course we will read short, influential novels that demand interpretation. In class discussions, we will work together to arrive at a clear "reading" of these books. Written assignments will focus on comparisons between texts. Some of the works will include: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Metamorphosis*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Heart of Darkness*.

Looking For An Argument?

This course will look at controversial issues in our society and analyze them from different points of view. The teachers will argue opposing positions and students will join in, taking whatever side they prefer. Students will also be encouraged to propose debate topics.

Students will take notes during every debate and do in-class reading and highlighting of articles that relate to the topics being debated. Every week they will also plan and write an in-class essay that connects or refers to the issues they have debated. The in-class essays are aimed at giving students the kind of time-limited, pressured writing experiences they can expect to encounter in college. Students will need to use their notes and their highlighted readings in order to write these weekly essays.

No homework will be assigned in this class. All in-class work will be placed in folders that the teachers and students will periodically examine and evaluate.

Mechanics

What's the best way to measure something? How can we find out how fast an object is moving? What measuring tools are the most accurate? This Physics course will address all of these questions. Students will conduct many hands-on experiments and will be required to write lab reports. Most class work will be completed in small groups. Homework will be assigned regularly. This course is only open to students who have passed Algebra 2.

Microbiology

Everything you touch, the air you breathe, you yourself are teeming with tiny creatures, also known as microbes. They can help you digest food or give you a stomachache, kill you or save your life. Although we evolved from microbes, some say they are the greatest threat to continued human life on earth. In this hands-on science class, expect to design and conduct experiments, do significant background research, and write formal papers. Recommendation of the math department is required.

Novels

Would you like to read more? Are you having trouble getting started? Are you stumped when it comes to choosing a book? Maybe you have never enjoyed reading novels or have never read a novel you enjoyed. Perhaps you've never completed a novel. THIS COURSE IS FOR YOU!

In this course you will:

- * Choose what you read
- * Decide whether you like it
- * Give and take recommendations about what to read from your mates.
- * Discuss the ideas and issues that can be found in novels.
- * Learn what you like to read.

Plant Propagation

Most of us buy our plants from nurseries already grown. Some of us will plant seeds to get plants. This is understandable since propagation through division, air-layering, grafting, tissue culture, peiole cutting, root cuttings, stem cuttings and modified stems are a lot of work and do not always work. In this class we will be doing the difficult methods of propagation. In addition, you will be required to know why certain methods of propagation work with some plants and not with others. This will be done through developing experiments and research.

Plays and Playwriting

A talking cat is stalked by her owner's psychotic, spurned girlfriend. A teenaged boy, alone and despairing, is driven to suicide. A pregnant woman is verbally abused by her unborn baby. A very bad theatre group tries not to kill each other as the play they are staging falls apart.

At its best, theater is a place where stories, true and fantastical, come dramatically to life. The stories above are just a few of the dramatic stories previous year's plays' classes saw presented, both in the theaters of New York City, where the class typically sees 6 - 7 plays, and here at Urban, where students write their own short plays and then work with a playwright and several actors, who eventually perform the students' works.

This spring too, we will go to see plays (New York has the best theater in the country!), including plays chosen by the class together. We will read and discuss plays in class. Then we will work with professional actors and playwrights to write our own short plays. **Students are required to attend several plays both during the school day and in the evenings.**

Political Philosophy

How should societies be organized so that humans can best live together? From Plato to Marx to current thinkers, philosophers have debated this question. In this advanced social studies course, we will carefully analyze the works of some of the most influential Western political philosophers. In addition we may read some Utopian or futuristic novels that deal with the question of how society should best be run. A weekly seminar will also give us a chance to consider a wide range of philosophical questions.

Questions we will consider include: What gives the government the right to make laws? Is it true that all people are equal? In what way? Are laws really necessary? Are humans naturally cooperative or aggressive? What, if anything, sets humans apart from other animals?

Weekly reading and writing assignments are an essential part of the course and form the basis for all class discussions.

Portrait Photography

What is a portrait? What makes a regular photograph of someone into a successful portrait photograph? In this class we will work exclusively on making portrait photographs. We will take photographs indoors and out, using artificial and natural lighting, and experiment with different camera formats. We will also look at various portrait exhibitions around the city. This class is open to beginners as well as advanced photographers.

Pre-Algebra

If you are not yet proficient in decimals, fractions, proportions, percents, and signed numbers, then this lab will fill in these gaps in your math knowledge. You'll do puzzles, play games, and do many, many math problems. This class will help you pass the calculations prerequisite of the math proficiency.

Probability and Statistics

This class will cover probability theory so that we can apply it to real life problems (statistics): sample spaces, bias and fairness, confidence of answers, conditional probability, table analysis, standard deviation, regression analysis, all of the kinds of averages, prediction and choice. We shall analyze newspaper studies on medicines, rare events such as AIDS and breast implants.

Solving puzzles and playing games are the basic procedures of the class and you will work mainly in small groups. Your job, as usual, is to figure things out and explain how you did the work.

Prerequisite: Teacher's recommendation.

Project Adventure

Love to climb? Scared of heights? Either way, have you ever wanted to walk a tight rope? Balance 10 people on a swinging log and then change places without falling? Sign your name on the ceiling of the gym? Climb a mountain? We do these things to challenge ourselves and to see what a group of people can do when working together. There will be a focus on teamwork, creative problem solving and setting goals for yourself.

In addition, in order to do the high ropes elements safely, students will learn how to make harnesses, tie knots and set up a belay system.

You do not need great strength or any previous experience to take this course, only the willingness to take some risks and try new things.

Science Projects

This course is open only to those students who must complete their data collection so that they can finish their science proficiency. These designated students MUST register for this class.

Social Documentary Photography 1

This course utilizes the lens of the camera and the photographer's eye to observe aspects of our society.

This class, as a whole will be asked to complete group projects. Students will be expected to shoot, edit and be responsible for completing the group projects decided upon:

- * To punctually complete in & out of class assignments.
- * To work together with other group members while handling various individual responsibilities well.
- * To attend a 3-5 Thursday darkroom session every week.

By the third week of class, students will have met with the teachers, spoken about ideas with the full class and defined an individual social documentary photography project that they will then be required to complete by the end of the semester.

Students wishing to take this class are welcome to speak with either of the teachers in order to clearly know what to expect. Passing grades will be given only upon the completion of an acceptable work in every group project. We welcome the participation of students who like to challenge themselves and want to know they've achieved something by the end of a course.

Telling Stories

In this photography class we will work at the art of telling stories with our photographs. The stories you choose to tell may or may not include text: you may choose to shoot documentary-style photographs; you may choose to shoot fantastic fantasies of your own imaginings - in other words there will be opportunities to try our hands at creating different kinds of narratives. Our common goals will be to become better storytellers, more critical viewers, and more exacting editors.

Class assignments will allow you to experiment with different ideas or to continue working on an on-going project. You will, however, be required to present each assignment to the class for critique. In these critiques you will share your process as well as your final project - you will share your notes, contact sheets and prints as well as your final selection of prints. You will also be expected to participate in critiques of your classmates' work. Thoughtful and constructive comments will be essential to the development of all your skills! There is a lab attached to this course that you must attend from 3:15 - 5:15 on Monday afternoons.

Textiles

Go back in time and learn how to embroider and weave by hand.

The Future

What will the world look like one hundred, five or even a thousand years from now? Will machines take over? Will there be a nuclear war? Will we have peace on earth? Will we even live on earth? Will Big Brother be watching over us?

In this literature class we will read a series of novels and short stories that present a vision(s) of the future. We will try to explore this topic even further by looking at a number of "futuristic" films. In addition to this we will also go out to interview people and visit sites around the city aimed at helping us understand just where we might be heading as a society.

Trigonometry

This class will cover identities, proofs, triangles, equations, patterns, and graphing. You will plan solutions to practical problems and will use a hands-on approach to problems outside the classroom. You will work mainly in small groups and will have regular homework and periodic quizzes and tests.

Prerequisite: Teacher recommendation.

Trumpet, Beginner - Learn to Play the Blues

This class will introduce the basics of trumpet playing and music theory. Students will learn to read and write music. In addition they will learn improvisation on the blues scale, as well as write their own blues tunes. The semester will end with an informal performance in June.

Trumpet, Intermediate - Ensemble Class

This class will continue both individual and group work in trumpet and theory. More focus will be placed on duet and ensemble playing in all styles including jazz, classical and blues. There will be two informal performances during the semester. As always students are encouraged to bring in tunes they want to learn. You must have taken beginner trumpet in order to take this course.

Twentieth Century American Foreign Policy Seminar

This history seminar will focus on America's role in this world and how it evolved during the 20th century. We will look at the question: What should be the guiding principles of American foreign policy? In examining this question we will look at historical examples from among the following: the First World War, the Korean War and the policy of containing communism, the Balkans in the 1990s, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. We will also consider the practical application of our theories for the current world situation (like relations between Pakistan and India, Iraq's military buildup, etc.) as it develops. There will be extensive weekly reading and at least three papers required.

Weight Room

Do you want to get in shape? Keep in shape? Change your shape? This fitness class will emphasize overall physical health. Students will learn to use the weight room as part of a responsible fitness regimen. No experience is necessary, but regular attendance and participation is required.

What's Cooking?

This class will focus on cooking techniques from the basics to the more involved, such as cooking salmon en papier (in parchment paper). We will develop skills in food preparation including: baking, sauteeing, recipe assessment, knife use, presentation, sanitation and clean up. We will start with soup and salad preparation and move to side dishes and main courses. Students will be asked to work in cooperation with others in both cooking and cleaning work. Students will be encouraged to be inventive in their cooking. You may be given a vegetable and asked to invent a way to cook it. We will taste and critique each other's work. In addition, there will be homework assignments. Note: This class meets on the fifth floor in the culinary arts room - that's four flights up!

When Worlds Collide: Fiction of the Immigrant Experience

What conflicts do newcomers to America face? How do people transition from culture to culture? How do the young people growing up in the U.S. bridge the gap between their lives at home and their lives within the popular culture?

These are some of the issues we will be exploring through fiction about the immigrant experience.

This is a class aimed at the more inexperienced reader. If you have taken few or no literature courses at Urban this may be for you.

We will read several novels, short stories and poems. We may even see a film or two. We will work on the elements necessary for writing an analytic literature paper.

Working in a Series

Working in a series allows artists to work with concepts that they find particularly compelling in depth. Working in a series also allows artists to develop their own style. This class will focus on creating a personal visual vocabulary that students can use in a variety of ways across many media. Initial assignments will concentrate on building skills and working in a series. Students will then have to develop a more complete body of work centered on a theme(s) of their choosing. Sketchbook assignments are a crucial part of this course!

World Literature

In this class we will take a look at novels and short stories written by authors from around the world - particularly countries which are just a little bit off the "beaten track." When was the last time you read a book written by someone from Haiti, China, South America, India or Egypt? We will go globe trotting - so come prepared to read and write about cultures and experiences different perhaps from your own.

Yearbook/Graphic Design Workshop

Did you see last year's yearbook? This one will be better! This class will be responsible for **all** phases of the production of the yearbook, from photographs and art layout to printing. If you have any questions about your role in the class, speak to the teacher before signing up. We welcome all skill levels of computer and photo enthusiasts.