Philosophy and Expanded Description of the Seminar:

The Columbia Journey Seminar (CJS) is a program available only to first-year students in the Columbia Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP). The CJS combines presentations and small discussion sections facilitated by a Graduate Student Mentor (GSM) and culminates with a capstone project.

The CJS offers a forum where scholars can begin to identify and explore the dialectic between themselves as students and their place in the larger local and global community. The seminars are designed to foster an intimate, communicative environment where intellectual curiosity and camaraderie thrive. The structure of the CJS promotes openness to discovery, dialogue, and debate while encouraging participation that is not bounded by disciplines and therefore leaves no interest or opportunity unexplored. Participation in the program is meant to encourage scholars to understand the intrinsic connections between their intellectual development, the Columbia campus experience, life in New York City, and events around the world.

The CJS is focused on the development of key critical thinking and research skills including: analysis of arguments and counter-arguments, assessment of source credibility, evidence gathering, interview techniques, off-site research and outreach, and presentation and production of scholarly work. Each week, Scholars will be asked to read (or, in the case of artistic works, experience) and respond to selected cross-disciplinary materials centered on the yearly theme. Selections will be chosen variously from the natural sciences and mathematics, the applied sciences and engineering, the social sciences, the humanities, the arts, and philosophy. In addition to this exploration through individual session assignments, Scholars will work towards developing a capstone project. It is the hope that Scholars involved in the CJS will approach their capstone work from their own unique perspective while the connection to the yearly theme will provide a common point-of-contact for an interdisciplinary approach to the life of the mind and the scholar community.
Activities subsumed under the mantle of “play” include many done just for the sake of doing, without necessary regard for an end or a goal of sustaining, prolonging, or materially enhancing life. In many such actions lie the seeds of intellectual, cultural, and technological development that are touchstones for modernity. Play, while often considered a juvenile activity, is observed to exist across cultural and species divides as a unifying type of behavior. Both structured and unstructured play have been considered by educational psychologists and philosophers to be a necessary part of life’s developmental and learning processes. Play, it is argued, leads to the ability to develop both cognitive and motor skills, think abstractly, and problem-solve in a context where making mistakes does not have the same serious consequences as during a de facto implementation of an idea. Play is not just mere facsimile or purely imaginative behavior; rather our playful abilities as humans to construct models as test for ideas before implementing them is what has allowed us to create and manipulate our environments to our own desires.

In theater, sport and everyday life, play often takes the form of performance. Here activities are structured with an eye towards exhibition before an audience, and spectatorship becomes another dimension through which social and cognitive development unfolds. By watching theatrical performances viewers rehearse emotional reactions to fictional persons and events; sporting events organize the experience of uncertainty and anticipation through competition, physical virtuosity and rule governed play, while musical and other forms of artistic performance bind performer and spectator together through the realization of unique instances of infinitely repeatable works of art. Scientific experiments, too, are performed and their results mobilized for interpretation before a community of experts. So are marriage ceremonies. With this last example we can begin to understand the efficacy embodied in the performance of certain kinds of actions, such as uttering the words “I do” or “I swear” in a court of law. Philosophers and social scientists have recently come to understand many facets of human life as performative in this sense: by performing certain actions—speaking, gesturing, dressing—we constitute our social identities and our own senses of self. It is in this sense that scholars now argue that gender is constituted and maintained by the repeated performances over time. Performance, like play, is a mode in which versions of the self and configurations of the physical and social world can be realized as well as destabilized, revised, and reconstructed.

Academics, artists, engineers, architects, writers, and mathematicians play with their tools and thoughts resulting in consequences that are often sublime, profound and arguably changing the course of history.

We mean to explore the concept of play with an interdisciplinary approach. What does play mean in the context of mathematics, chemistry, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, history, the visual arts, music, or dance? What are toys and how do we build and design them? What are the spaces and opportunities we have for play as adults in a modern/post-modern society? Who is afforded the opportunity to play and why? How is play related to the hierarchies and divisions that exist in our society at large?
Outline of Scholar responsibilities. Every scholar is required to

1. Attend each CJS.
2. Complete the assigned readings and write an on-line response of no more than 250 words
3. Complete three projects external to the seminar over the course of the year:
   A) Interview of an expert, professor, or college instructor.
   B) Site visit to a New York institution external to Columbia University.
   C) Capstone project related to the theme of the Columbia Journey Seminar.

We describe each of these external projects in turn:

A) Interview. Each scholar will contact a professor or a course instructor and conduct and interview that should be completed by Session 6. The goal of the interview is to find out about the career and research trajectory of a respected scholar in a field of interest to the CJS student. Students should plan on conducting anywhere from a 10 to 30 minute interview and will report their results of such to the rest of their CJS section during Session 6.

B) Site Visit. Students will contact and visit an institution external to Columbia University with whom they have limited or no previous connection. The goal of the site visit is to escape from the confines and insular research community of the Columbia campus so that scholars might avail themselves of resources in the community outside the university. Students should take notes and give a report about their site visit during Session 4. Arranging the time for a site visit can take in excess of a month, so it is important that students begin to plan this early: perhaps even at the beginning of the year.

C) Capstone Project. Students will, through the guidance and mentorship of their GSM, produce a capstone project related to the theme of “Play and Performance” that they will design, execute, and present. Informing one's capstone project with the interviews or site visit projects may be possible and interested students are encouraged to do this. Capstone projects can range from research work to artwork to performance pieces to engineering projects. Students should propose a project to their GSM by Session 6 (through direct interaction with the GSM you will determine if it will be a written research proposal, a performance, sample work, or a short presentation). Students will present their completed capstone projects during Session 8.

Course Outline: Each session takes place over a two-hour time period once every two weeks. During each session, a variety of topics will be discussed and engaged including: readings centered around the CJS theme, critical thinking skills connected to the pedagogic goals of the CJS, external projects, CUSP activities and events, campus life, and student advising. Each GSM will design their seminars with different emphases, but the broad connection to the main topics and projects will be maintained through the common rubrics and readings. Attendance, completion of assigned reading and reading responses, and completion of the external projects are required for the scholar to remain in good standing in the program. Records of attendance and postings on the readings will be kept on the CJS Courseworks site.
FALL 2012

Session 1. Introduction:
Welcome! Introduction of fellow seminar members. Seminar and CUSP program overview. Review of CJS theme.

Thematic questions to consider: What is play? Who decides what is play and what is not? How do we distinguish play from work? What are the goals or outcomes of play?

Reading:

Session 2. Arguments and Counterarguments:
Assess arguments advanced in assigned readings. What is the main line of argument in the reading? What are the reasons given to support that argument? Are these plausible? Are they contentious? How would we articulate a compelling counter-argument? How are debates played out in the academic, political, or social arenas?

Thematic questions to consider: How is play a part of culture and of the larger society? Is it cordoned off from “reality” or does it form an integral part of other human activities? What are examples of “real life” slipping into the play sphere?

Readings:


Session 3. Assessing Source Credibility and Locations for Research:
Location/Site visit: What is the purpose of a site visit? How to do a site visit? What types of data can be collected at a site visit? What is the importance of place in research?

Source Credibility: How do we identify credible authors and informants? In the instance of academic sources, how do we determine which are the most cited and reliable in a given field? What are the authors’ methodologies? How can we assess their use of statistics? Is a particular journal “peer-reviewed”? Should we be concerned with citing the most influential publications and authors? Are there any reasonable objections to this norm? What is the status of blogs,
Twitter, Wikipedia (etc.) for academic writing? How do we identify credible websites? Should all websites be taken equally seriously? Is knowledge in this way “democratic”? With regard to informal sources determine (i) with whom are its authors affiliated; (ii) whether they are credible (or not) and why.

Thematic questions to consider: Do different genders act play differently? Are there innate play preferences or is it all a societal construct? Can we extrapolate from mammals to humans? Is play a performance, especially vis-a-vis gender? How do people play or perform genders?

Readings:


More on Gender and Play/Performance: (optional)


Session 4. Evidence Gathering:
DUE: Site-Visit Report.

Present final finding from New York City site visit in five minutes maximum.
Formulate and discuss focused questions in response to the theme. What does a well-formulated research question entail? Distinguish between different types of evidence: qualitative/quantitative, theoretical/applied, bibliographic/field research. What research methods are appropriate to each type of question/outcomes? Are any methods intrinsically superior, or should we be pluralists about research methodology? Discuss the use and availability of library resources, databases, computing options, and alternative forms of research. We will give an overview of Institutional Review Board system and other research regulations. Scholars will begin to formulate an approach to a capstone project, whether it be a traditional research project, multimedia foray, an artistic work, or an engineering design.
Thematic questions to consider: How does play encourage the cultivation of cultural and cognitive knowledge? Has Westernization/modernization changed the manner in which play proceeds or is understood? Does the evidence gathered support, in your mind, the conclusions drawn?

Reading:

**SPRING 2013**

**Session 5. Interviews:**
Discuss how to interview sources such as professors and other research experts as well as research study participants. Discuss Columbia affiliates selected by Scholars and how best to access them including contact etiquette, interview design, active listening, and the goals of interviewing. Connecting the interview to the capstone project is possible but not a requirement.

Thematic questions to consider: Is there a place for play or performance within quantitative or evidence-based study? What mathematical and scientific principles/habits of mind can be reinforced with play or kinetic performance? What is the role of creativity in science and in academic study in general?

Readings:


5. Four scientists respond to the question: “What is the role of creativity in science?” curiosity.discovery.com/question/creativity-role-in-science

**Session 6. Experience and Knowledge:**
DUE: Interview
DUE: Capstone Project Proposal (Email to instructor a minimum of 24 hours before CJS)
Present final finding from interview in five minutes maximum. Discuss submitted project proposals and offer constructive criticism to improve their feasibility, scope, and likelihood for success.

Thematic questions to consider: Are games worthwhile and do they have the capability, as McGonigal claims, to change the world? Do the games we play enrich our lives or distract us from more productive activity?

Readings:
1. TED talk: Jane McGonigal: *Gaming can make a better world*  
http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world.html

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704590704576092460302990884.html


4. Radio Lab (podcast, 20 min.). Season 10, Episode 2, *The Rules will Set You Free*  
(To hear entire "Games" episode: http://www.radiolab.org/2011/aug/23/)

Session 7. Presentation and Production:
Query the art and science of producing an effective presentation including knowing your audience and scaling your capstone properly. Students should have selected a capstone project that encompasses the theme of the CJS. Appropriate forms of final project presentations include, but are not limited to, research essays, short talks, poster presentations, artistic works accompanied by an artist's statement, short films, architecture or engineering blueprints, computer-aided designs and drafts, executive reports, or performances!

Thematic questions to consider: How does performance differ from other forms of communication? How does the human body, specifically its form, motion, and function affect performance? What does performance mean when it is art?

Readings:

2. Explore the site and watch the videos in the watch interviews section (particularly the body as medium, documenting performance, and what is performance) of Abramovic, Marina (2010). *The Artist Is Present.* Installation, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).  
http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/

3. La Rocco, Claudia. *Some at MOMA Show Forget 'Look But Don't Touch'.* (The New York
Session 8. Capstone Project:
DUE: Capstone Project

Over the course of the CJS, we will make it clear that there is a “consistent demand to make a substantive reflection in which you demonstrate your personal understanding of the central theme of the CJS.” This is the Scholar's chance to present his or her interpretation.

Further Reading:

Below is a list of recommended readings. Feel free to use them to explore further into the theme of play and performance. Also, think about using them as a jumping off point for your capstone project.

Anthropology

Economics
http://www.dklevine.com/general/whatis.htm

Education

www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/mar/08/schools-we-can-envy

http://www.ted.com/talks/arthur_benjamin_does_mathemagic.html

Engineering

History

Humanities
www.pbs.org/art21/films/play
**Medicine**  

**Performance Studies**  

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9w7jHYriFo  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIfMsZwr8rc

**Political Science**  

**Psychology**  


TED talk: (2008) Stuart Brown says play is more than fun:  
www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than_fun_it_s_vital.html

**Public Health**  
The importance of play spaces from a public health and development perspective:  

**Sociology**  