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HONORS PROGRAMS  
HONORS & UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS  
A-311 MURPHY HALL  
405 HILGARD AVE BOX 951414  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1414

January 24, 2013

Scott Chandler, Chair  
General Education Governance Committee  
A265 Murphy Hall  
157101

Attention: Myrna Dee F. Castillo, Program Representative

Dear Professor Chandler:

Please review the course *The Society of Excess: On Waste, Consumer Culture, and the Environment*, taught by Professor Maite Zubiaurre, for two general education foundations: Foundations of the Arts and Humanities, and/or Foundations of Society and Culture.

Sincerely,

G. Jennifer Wilson, Ph.D.  
Assist. Vice Provost for Honors  
UCLA  
[gjwilson@college.ucla.edu](mailto:gjwilson@college.ucla.edu)  
(310) 825-1752

\*\*\*HONORS COLLEGIUM\*\*\*HONORS COLLEGIUM\*\*\*

**General Education Course Information Sheet**

*Please submit this sheet for each proposed course*

Department & Course Number HONORS COLLEGIUM 44  
 Course Title The Society of Excess: On Waste, Consumer Culture, and the Environment  
 Indicate if Seminar and/or Writing II course Seminar

1 Check the recommended GE foundation area(s) and subgroups(s) for this course

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>Foundations of the Arts and Humanities</b>                               | <u>X</u>        |
| • Literary and Cultural Analysis  | <u>X</u>        |
| • Philosophic and Linguistic Analysis                                       | <u>        </u> |
| • Visual and Performance Arts Analysis and Practice                         | <u>X</u>        |
| <b>Foundations of Society and Culture</b>                                   | <u>X</u>        |
| • Historical Analysis   | <u>        </u> |
| • Social Analysis   | <u>X</u>        |
| <b>Foundations of Scientific Inquiry</b>                                    | <u>        </u> |
| • Physical Science  | <u>        </u> |
| <i>With Laboratory or Demonstration Component must be 5 units (or more)</i> | <u>        </u> |
| • Life Science  | <u>        </u> |
| <i>With Laboratory or Demonstration Component must be 5 units (or more)</i> | <u>        </u> |

2. Briefly describe the rationale for assignment to foundation area(s) and subgroup(s) chosen.

This is an interdisciplinary Honors seminar that examines the social, political, and cultural ramifications of waste pollution in both the environment and virtual world.

3. "List faculty member(s) who will serve as instructor (give academic rank):

Do you intend to use graduate student instructors (TAs) in this course?    Yes                No    X  
 If yes, please indicate the number of TAs         

4. Indicate when do you anticipate teaching this course over the next three years:

2012-2013	Fall	<u>        </u>	Winter	<u>        </u>	Spring	<u>X</u>
	Enrollment	<u>        </u>	Enrollment	<u>        </u>	Enrollment	<u>20</u>
2013-2014	Fall	<u>        </u>	Winter	<u>X</u>	Spring	<u>        </u>
	Enrollment	<u>        </u>	Enrollment	<u>20</u>	Enrollment	<u>        </u>
2014-2015	Fall	<u>        </u>	Winter	<u>X</u>	Spring	<u>        </u>
	Enrollment	<u>        </u>	Enrollment	<u>20</u>	Enrollment	<u>        </u>

5. GE Course Units

Is this an ***existing*** course that has been modified for inclusion in the new GE?    Yes                No    X  
 If yes, provide a brief explanation of what has changed.         

Present Number of Units:                               Proposed Number of Units: 5

6. Please present concise arguments for the GE principles applicable to this course.

X General Knowledge	This is a course that includes a discursive look at society and culture in a way that enhances general knowledge of societal excess, the computer age, and the environment.
X Integrative Learning	The course is interdisciplinary including comparative literature, history, sociology, political sciences, anthropology, environmental studies, philosophy, art history, gender studies, and digital humanities, among others.
X Ethical Implications	Some parts of this course examine ways in which the Western hemisphere often mismanages and inflicts its environmental disasters upon Third World countries.
X Cultural Diversity	Many cultural viewpoints from Western and Third World countries upon waste and its effects on the environment are addressed (e.g. Germany, India, Kenya).
X Critical Thinking	Students required to think critically about complex concepts of culture, art, and the environment
X Rhetorical Effectiveness	Writing required and assessed
X Problem-solving	Course raises issues of “how?” (e.g. How does waste relate to consumer culture? How does it evolve?) and exhorts students to seek answers.
X Library & Information Literacy	Course requires library/web research

**(A) STUDENT CONTACT PER WEEK (if not applicable write N/A)**

- |   |                   |         |
|---|-------------------|---------|
| 1. Lecture:   | <u>3</u>          | (hours) |
| 2. Discussion Section:                                  | <u>          </u> | (hours) |
| 3. Labs:  | <u>          </u> | (hours) |
| 4. Experiential (service learning, internships, other): | <u>          </u> | (hours) |
| 5. Field Trips:   | <u>          </u> | (hours) |

**(A) TOTAL Student Contact Per Week** **3** **(HOURS)**

**(B) OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS PER WEEK (if not applicable write N/A)**

- |                                     |                   |         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| 1. General Review & Preparation:    | <u>1</u>          | (hours) |
| 2. Reading                          | <u>4</u>          | (hours) |
| 3. Group Projects:                  | <u>          </u> | (hours) |
| 4. Preparation for Quizzes & Exams: | <u>          </u> | (hours) |
| 5. Information Literacy Exercises:  | <u>1</u>          | (hours) |
| 6. Written Assignments: (amortized) | <u>4</u>          | (hours) |
| 7. Research Activity: (amortized)   | <u>2</u>          | (hours) |

**(B) TOTAL Out-of-class time per week** **12** **(HOURS)**

**GRAND TOTAL (A) + (B) must equal at least 15 hours/week** **15** **(HOURS)**

**Course Proposal for the Honors Collegium**  
(Academic Year 2012-2013)

Maite Zubiaurre  
([Zubiaurre@ucla.edu](mailto:Zubiaurre@ucla.edu))

**Course Title:**

The Society of Excess: On Waste, Consumer Culture, and the Environment

**Course Rationale:**

“In 1986, the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, hired a company to get rid of the ash from their incinerator plant. Some of this ash contained hazardous chemicals. 13,000 tons (11,700 metric tons) of ash were loaded on a ship named the *Khian Sea*. It spent twenty-seven months at sea stopping in Panama, Haiti, Honduras, Bermuda, Africa, and the Bahamas, trying to unload its cargo, which was labeled as fertilizer ash. The ship eventually returned to Philadelphia where it was turned away. With the ship showing signs of rusting, it left Philadelphia with a new name, the *Felicia*. It sailed to the Philippines where it was again turned away. After another name change, this time to *Pelicano*, the ship docked at Singapore. The cargo of hazardous waste had disappeared. No one would say what had happened to it.”

The quotation above reads as a mystery novel. It fittingly foreshadows the spirit of this course, which sees -and teaches- waste or trash as a mystery indeed, as an enigmatic reality subject to many intriguing questions: When was trash “born?” How does it evolve? Where does hazardous waste go? What does it mean when a ship loaded with toxic ash “disappears”? Does the idea of disposable excess also apply to the virtual world? How does waste relate to consumer culture? Why does trash appeal so strongly to many artists, writers, and film makers from different cultures and periods?

But, more important, the enigmatic destiny of the ship *Khian Sea/Felicia/Pelicano* is a somber reminder of the many environmental disasters that plague our world, and that the Western hemisphere often inflicts upon Third World countries: in the computer age, the illegal exportation of toxic e-waste, for example, has become a common occurrence. Women and children from countries and continents such as China, Indonesia, India, and Africa dismantle the discarded computers in search for valuable metals, putting their health at risk.

In sum, if the first goal of the course is to treat trash as a mystery novel, and to unearth a great number of its enigmatic aspects with the help of numerous questions, the second goal of the course is to never lose sight of the environment and the many social, political, and cultural ramifications of waste pollution: as this course shows, the different forms of art that use and reflect upon trash and leftover materials are acutely aware of

environmental issues. In fact, “trash art” (which I use in a broad term that also includes literature and film) is always “art *engagée*.”

### **Course Description:**

This course is about waste (trash, garbage, rubbish, rubble) in both the real and the virtual worlds. Against the double backdrop of a society of excess and an environment constantly threatened by the overflowing and mismanagement of waste, this course looks at the various cultural representations of trash. It poses a series of practical and theoretical questions about, for example, trash and gender, trash and childhood, trash and the domestic, trash and travel, trash and terror, trash as spectacle, and trash, play, and art. More important, this course emphasizes the all-pervasive link between all the aspects of trash and an endangered environment.

The course draws on a wide array of sources, such as environmental studies, literature (particularly fiction), film, philosophy, journalism, criminology, anthropology, sociology, technology, cultural history, and, last but not least, internet and cyber-studies. With the help of these disciplines and areas of interest, the course reflects upon the recurrent sub-themes or even sub-genres of the theme “trash,” such as the underground life of dumpsters, body farms as the generators of useful and scientifically relevant “trash,” the children-playing-in-the-rubble motif, and the virulent cyber battle against Internet debris.

### **Course Syllabus:**

The course is divided into four thematic units as outlined below. Two weeks are devoted to each unit. The course begins with an introductory session and ends with a review session.

Introduction: Trash: Its History and Its Themes (Week 1)

1. The Landfill: Trash, Society, and the Environment (Weeks 2 and 3)
  2. 9/11: Rubble and Memory (Weeks 4 and 5)
  3. Cleaning the E-Mess: Trash and Computers (Week 6 and 7)
  4. Garbologists, Trash Artists, and E-Debris Players (Week 8 and 9)
- Review (Week 10)

Below are descriptions of the four thematic units:

#### **1. The Landfill: Trash, Society, and the Environment**

Unit 1 studies the polluting effects of waste, in particular of domestic or municipal solid waste (MSW), and the different ways in which states and municipalities in the U.S. fight the negative repercussions of trash on the environment. The average American generates

around 4.6 pounds of solid waste per day. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most of it goes to the 3,091 active landfills in the U.S., to which one has to add over 10,000 old municipal landfills. In many ways, the landfill is the strategic center of the waste management process. Trash arrives at landfills, and piles up before being buried, incinerated, or recycled. In the long run, landfills constitute a hazard to health and the environment. According to Zerowasteamerica.org, “all landfills will eventually fail and leak leachate (contaminated water) into ground and surface water.” But as this Unit explores, landfills are more than “just” potentially contaminated, and contaminating loci: they are strategic enclaves, where a series of complex social (and commercial) transactions take place: whole populations and families of rag pickers and scavengers live out of landfills. Also, many of these waste pickers are women, a fact explored by scholars interested in the conjunction of trash and gender. Finally, artists also find a (temporary) home in dumping grounds and landfills. The “Artist in Residence Program” at the *Recology Solid Waste Transfer and Recycling Center* in San Francisco offers artists the opportunity to freely scavenge the dumping site and create art pieces with the help of recycled trash. (This Unit contemplates a daytrip to *Puente Hills Landfill* near Los Angeles, and the third biggest landfill in the U.S. *Puente Hills Landfill* is open to the public).

### **Readings:**

- Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess (Selected Writings, 1927-1939)*, 1985. (Excerpts)  
 Heather Rogers, “Technological Fix: The Sanitary Landfill.” In: *Gone Tomorrow. The Hidden Life of Garbage*, 2005.  
 William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, “The Landfill Excavations.” In: *Rubbish! The Archeology of Garbage*, 2001.  
 Elizabeth Royte, “To the Dump.” In: *Garbage Land. On the Secret Trail of Trash*, 2005.  
 Rosalind Fredericks, “Gender and the Politics of Trash in Dakar: Participation, Labor and the “Undisciplined” Woman, 2008.  
 Maria Muller & Anne Schienberg, “Gender and Urban Waste Management,” 2009.  
 Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, 1998.

## **2. 9/11: Rubble and Memory**

Unit 2 follows the trail of rubble from the Twin Towers. Rubble becomes a wandering object, familiar, at home, with laboratories, landfills, and recycling facilities, but accustomed also to traveling abroad. With increasing frequency, so-called third world countries are becoming the dumpsites of the Western world. Rubble migrates. The debris from the Twin Towers after the terrorist attack were taken to Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island and carefully divided into the useful and the useless, an uncanny replica of the immigrants that flocked to Ellis Island at the end of the nineteenth century. Rubble also travels in the guise of fashionable souvenirs. Pieces of the Twin Towers become eagerly sought-after mementoes. Certainly the removal of debris creates an empty space that invites memorialization and the multiplication of nostalgic artifacts meant to activate memory. Also, the rubble landscape from 9/11 and its many visual representations eerily

reminds us of the sea of rubble famously depicted in the German filmic subgenre known as “Trümmerfilm” (rubble film).

### Readings:

Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, “Sacred Property: Searching for Value in the 9/11 Rubble,” 2009.

Eric Lipton & James Glanz, “Relics: From the Rubble, Artifacts of Anguish,” 2002.

Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter. Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, 2006. (Excerpts).

Jens Lachmund, “Exploring the City of Rubble,” 2003.

Johannes von Moltke, “Ruin Cinema,” 2010.

Eric Rentschler, “The Place of Rubble in the Trümmerfilm,” 2010.

Roberto Rossellini, *Germany Year Zero*, 1948 (Film)

### 3. Cleaning the E-Mess: Trash and Computers

Unit 3 reflects upon the meaning of E-debris both in the real and the virtual realm. Computers can become trash (in fact, when they “die” they turn into E-waste), and at the same time and during their life cycle they produce and store trash. What is Internet garbage? Who decides what is disposable, and what is not? Is virtual debris a menace and an uneasy subject, as is garbage in the real world? Many internet users defend themselves from garbage through filters/monitors, before other people’s garbage reaches them. For example, parents install computer programs/barriers to keep away pornography, cyber-bullying, and (presumably “real”) predators from their computer-savvy offspring. If the garbage is already there, then the only efficient way to discard it is to overwrite it multiple times via so-called shredders. As in the real world, the upper strata of debris press the lower strata against the soil and help them to disintegrate. Paradoxically, the only way to get rid of virtual garbage once and for all is to literally destroy the hard disc, thus turning it into “real” rubbish. And, as this Unit explores, “real” E-trash has dire consequences for the environment. According to USNews, “each year between 20-50 million tons of e-waste is generated world-wide. Due to the crude recycling process, many pollutants, such as heavy metals, are released from e-waste, which can easily accumulate in the human body through the inhalation of contaminated air.” These pollutants not only harm humans but also animals, plants, and microorganisms.

### Readings:

Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste*, 2006. (Excerpts)

Peter Hugo, “Dumping Across the Digital Divide,” 2010.

Toxics Link, “Scrapping the Hi-Tech Myth: Computer Waste in India,” 2003.

Romano Espejo, *What is the Impact of E-Waste?* 2008. (Excerpts)

### 4. Garbologists, Trash Artists, and E-Debris Players

Unit 4 studies the findings of “garbologists” or garbage scientists, the creations of artists mesmerized with rubbish, and the games around disposal designed by Internet gamers. We will consider garbage as a tool of knowledge, artistic expression, and play in the real and virtual worlds. More important, trash artists use their art and manipulation of throwaway materials to critically reflect upon the impact consumption and waste has on society and the environment.

### **Readings:**

Annelise della Rosa, *The Art of Recycling in Kenya*, 2008.  
 Cuauhtémoc Medina, “SEMEFO, The Morgue,” 2004.  
 Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want. A Social History of Trash*, 1999. (Excerpts)  
 Lucy Walker, *Waste Land*, 2010. (Film)

### **Course Materials:**

I have listed some of the course readings under each thematic unit, just to offer an example of the variety of materials available to the student in the form of a course reader. In addition to the reader, the students will read a novel (Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*), watch two films (Roberto Rossellini’s *Germany Year Zero* and Lucy Walker’s *Waste Land*), and navigate the Internet in search of both cyber-trash (Unit 3) and art (Unit 4). Unit 3 and Unit 4 in particular demand a hands-on approach with students having to actively explore cyber space, which is why the amount of reading for these Units is relatively light in comparison to the readings assigned to Units 1 and 2.

### **Grading System:**

Class Participation: 15%

Students will be expected to carefully read all assigned texts and will come to class prepared to discuss them in detail.

Written Assignments: 40%

After each of the four Units, students will submit a writing assignment or “reaction paper” of approximately three to four pages. Each of the writing assignments is 10% of the grade.

Midterm Exam: 20%

The Midterm Exam will consist of a research paper of approximately eight pages.

Final Exam: 25%

The Final Exam will consist of a research paper of approximately eight pages.



**Disciplines of Interest:** Comparative Literature, History, Sociology, Political Sciences, Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Philosophy, Art History, Gender Studies, and Digital Humanities, among others.

**Number of Units:** 5

**Enrollment:** 20 students

**Preferred Quarter:** Winter

**Class Meeting Schedule:** A three-hour weekly seminar to be taught on Mondays or Wednesdays. No TA needed.

I envision this highly interdisciplinary course as **lower division**. I agree with the Honors Collegium that it is important to “introduce honors students to interdisciplinary curricula before they enter their major coursework.”



## UCLA Course Inventory Management System

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### New Course Proposal

	<b>Honors Collegium 44</b> <b>Society of Excess: On Waste, Consumer Culture, and Environment</b>
<u>Course Number</u>	Honors Collegium 44
<u>Title</u>	Society of Excess: On Waste, Consumer Culture, and Environment
<u>Short Title</u>	WASTE&CULTURE&ENVIR
<u>Units</u>	Fixed: 5
<u>Grading Basis</u>	Letter grade or Passed/Not Passed
<u>Instructional Format</u>	Seminar - 3 hours per week
<u>TIE Code</u>	SEMT - Seminar (Topical) [T]
<u>GE Requirement</u>	Yes
<u>Major or Minor Requirement</u>	No
<u>Requisites</u>	Designed for students in College Honors
<u>Course Description</u>	Seminar, three hours. Designed for College Honors students. Examination of waste in both real and virtual worlds, looking in interdisciplinary ways at various cultural representations of trash set against backdrop of society of excess and environment constantly threatened by overflowing and mismanaged waste, including social and cultural responses to physical waste and cyber battle against Internet debris. P/NP or letter grading.
<u>Justification</u>	This course is offered as part of the series of interdisciplinary courses called the Honors Collegium and is designed for College Honors students. After undergoing some recommended revisions, the course has been approved by the Honors Faculty Advisory Committee, whose members come from a variety of disciplines, and by its Chair. It will be put forward to the GE committee.
<u>Syllabus</u>	File <a href="#">012ZubiaurreFinalProposal.doc</a> was previously uploaded. You may view the file by clicking on the file name.
<u>Supplemental Information</u>	
<u>Grading Structure</u>	<b>Four written Unit assignments of 3-4 pages 10% each = 40%</b> <b>Midterm 8 page research paper = 20%</b> <b>Final 8 page research paper = 25%</b> <b>Class participation = 15%</b>
<u>Effective Date</u>	Winter 2013

<u>Instructor</u>	Name	Title
	<b>Maite Zubiarre</b>	<b>Professor</b>
<u>Quarters Taught</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Fall <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Summer	
<u>Department</u>	<b>Honors Collegium</b>	
<u>Contact</u>	Name	E-mail
	<b>G JENNIFER WILSON</b>	<b>gjwilson@college.ucla.edu</b>
<u>Routing Help</u>		

## ROUTING STATUS

<b>Role:</b>	Registrar's Office
<b>Status:</b>	Processing Completed
<b>Role:</b>	Registrar's Publications Office - Hennig, Leann Jean (lhennig@registrar.ucla.edu) - 56704
<b>Status:</b>	Added to SRS on 9/12/2012 9:32:54 AM
<b>Changes:</b>	Title, Description
<b>Comments:</b>	Edited course description into official version; corrected title.
<b>Role:</b>	Registrar's Scheduling Office - Thomson, Douglas N (dthomson@registrar.ucla.edu) - 51441
<b>Status:</b>	Added to SRS on 9/5/2012 1:33:32 PM
<b>Changes:</b>	Short Title
<b>Comments:</b>	No Comments
<b>Role:</b>	FEC School Coordinator - Castillo, Myrna Dee Figurac (mcastillo@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
<b>Status:</b>	Approved on 9/5/2012 11:02:36 AM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	Routing to Doug Thomson in the Registrar's Office
<b>Role:</b>	FEC Chair or Designee - Meranze, Michael (meranze@history.ucla.edu) - 52671
<b>Status:</b>	Approved on 8/23/2012 1:51:51 PM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	No Comments
<b>Role:</b>	L&S FEC Coordinator - Castillo, Myrna Dee Figurac (mcastillo@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
<b>Status:</b>	Returned for Additional Info on 8/22/2012 4:01:13 PM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	Routing to Michael Meranze for FEC approval
<b>Role:</b>	Dean College/School or Designee - Friedmann, Manuela Christin (mfriedmann@college.ucla.edu) - 58510
<b>Status:</b>	Approved on 8/20/2012 4:00:12 PM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	This approval is being forwarded on behalf of Judith L. Smith, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.
<b>Role:</b>	L&S FEC Coordinator - Castillo, Myrna Dee Figurac (mcastillo@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
<b>Status:</b>	Returned for Additional Info on 8/14/2012 9:32:55 AM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	Routing to Manuela Friedmann for Dean Smith's approval
<b>Role:</b>	Department Chair or Designee - Gurval, Robert A (gurval@humnet.ucla.edu) - 56744

<b>Status:</b>	Approved on 8/1/2012 10:21:02 PM
<b>Changes:</b>	No Changes Made
<b>Comments:</b>	No Comments
<b>Role:</b>	Initiator/Submitter - Wilson, G Jennifer (gjwilson@college.ucla.edu) - 51752
<b>Status:</b>	Submitted on 8/1/2012 5:47:12 PM
<b>Comments:</b>	Initiated a New Course Proposal