ACORNS TO OAKS

Galápagos Islands, Ecuador 2016 – 2017 • Albania 2018 • Mongolia 2019
T-D's annual academic themes usually revolve around a specific country or culture and, every once in a while, an historical figure. The 2015-16 year is somewhat different as Frank Sinatra takes center stage.

Not everyone was happy, pleased or satisfied with the choice of Old Blue Eyes as the theme for 2015-16. In years past, T-D saluted Lincoln and discovered his depression. T-D also saluted Churchill and discovered his love of the spirits. T-D saluted Napoleon and discovered his indifference to human life. In my mind Frank Sinatra brought more people together in good times and in bad than anyone of these three monumental characters.

I will not say I'm sorry to all the Elvis fans who think he's bigger than Old Blue Eyes. Sinatra never needed to gyrate to generate an audience's enthusiasm or adoration. He simply got to the heart of the matter and the heart has reasons the mind does not know. It's not just his songs; it's not just the way he croons. It is his song, his crooning and the LYRICS that make Sinatra a 20th century icon known simply as "The Voice". Every T-D student and parent now has an opportunity to sing along with Sinatra. From Hoboken to Hollywood, T-D will walk in Sinatra's shoes, celebrating his life, acknowledging his imperfections and singing his verses, which made his fans and everyone else who heard them feel a little bit better.

To put Sinatra on stage T-D has numerous course offerings reflecting his voice and his influence. A few course descriptions appear here just to get a taste of what is on T-D's Old Blue Eyes plate.

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Sinatra's Century

Modern American History

This class will explore American history and culture from 1945 to the early 21st Century. One of the main themes of history during this time period is America's engagement with the world, so the Cold War is an important part of our studies. However, this class will also focus on American domestic politics and culture.

We will begin with a quick look back at the first 40 years of the 20th Century; especially the Great Depression. Then a quick survey of the political and cultural effects of World War II. This will set the stage for the rest of the course.

We next look at the early post-war world. This time period is usually studied in the light of the beginning of the Cold War, but we will also look at how living in a new post-war world had its own domestic challenges.

Then the Fifties! We will spend time with the coming of all of the icons of this age: the bomb, the baby boom, suburbia, rock & roll and the comeback of Frank Sinatra to name a few. We will also look at the nitty-gritty of creating a new technological age and a new political order.

The Sixties...we will cover all the major changes in society and we will look at the great cultural changes that occurred. However, a lot happened that has been forgotten or overlooked especially (again) in the political and economic histories of the time.

The Seventies will cover the rise of both activism and conservatism. A new kind of Cold War is an important topic. The economic problems of this time are also part of this unit. The Eighties and the Reagan Era. At home there is a change in politics and culture. In the wider world the Cold War debates in the United States are an important part of the politics of this era.

The New World Order...otherwise known as the end of the Cold War... or sometimes the “End of History”. We start and end with politics. The debates about, and the events in the Middle East are important, but politics at home often created the biggest headlines. The Nineties and the early 2000s will look at how another “post-war” world was created.
“Fly Me to the Moon”

ASTRONOMY

This course is a survey of everything from the edge of the atmosphere to the end of the universe. Since we only have one school year to cover what is (almost) literally an infinity of information we will obviously be doing a lot of overviews and summaries. However, the basic purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the basic concepts of astronomy and to hopefully bring a whole new understanding to the night sky.

The night sky is where we will begin. What do we see at night from the New York City area. How does the sky change over the course of a year? Why does the sky change? We will look at the cycles of celestial objects as seen from Earth and then introduce the various systems for locating stars in the sky. Finally we will look at what information we can get from these stars and how we can begin to study the stars using this information.

Of course the planets we are most familiar with have been in the news lately. The furthest planet of our own solar system was just visited and news about Pluto will continue to come in over the next year. We will look at what we know about them, how we think they formed and what the chances might be for life on these other worlds. Finally we will return to the newly discovered planets around other stars to look at how they compare to the planets we know.

On the stars. We will start with the classic studies that led to our basic classification system for stars. Then we will study the life and death of stars and how this has affected the evolution of the stars in our galaxy. We will take a quick side trip into how the elements in the universe are created and why it is said “we are all star stuff”. Finally we will look at groups of stars in galaxies and clusters and what appears to be the organization of the galaxies in the universe.

Which will bring us to the universe. How did it start, what is it doing now, and what is going to happen to it? Theories of the universe and space and time. These discussions will of course lead us to questions of life on other planets and we will take a quick look at planets around other stars.
There are many kinds of mysteries. In today’s world we still wonder about the old questions: are there sea serpents, is my house haunted, who built that ruin. The rapid pace of technical progress seems to have added to these with new mysteries: What is that shiny thing in the sky, what are they really doing in that secret laboratory. This course is a look at some of the most famous mysteries of the 20th and early 21st centuries. We will have fun with them but we will also look for what facts and fears might lie behind these stories.

We will begin with Atlantis because it is one of those subjects that brings together many of the strands of modern myth and mystery. Where did the story come from? The fall and rise of the idea of catastrophes. Lost civilizations and fringe archaeology (or is it forbidden archaeology?). Ancient astronauts and elder civilizations. We will introduce the idea of looking skeptically at information...and the skeptics and look at how nearly scientific and totally outlandish these subjects can be.

From Atlantis we will go on to other popular subjects in the unexplained—

THINGS IN THE SKY: UFOs of course but other sky mysteries. UFOs are a fascinating subject by themselves. We will use the text for an overview of flying saucers and flying cigars, then we will look at the history of this popular phenomenon from the hysteria of the fifties to the grey aliens of the nineties and what’s going on today. We will also talk about thunderbirds, flying mothmen, and very odd thunderstorms: the non UFO mysteries that were around before we worried about little grey men and are still around.

THINGS IN THE DARK WOODS AND DEEP OCEANS: Crytozoology, the study (?) of mysterious animals. These include the old favorites Bigfoot and Sea Serpents, however there are other lesser known creatures that have attracted attention from time to time. Sometimes it is just mysterious footprints, sometimes it is fleeting encounters and sometimes it is up close and personal. We will look at the outrageous and those creatures that might actually exist but just haven’t been photographed yet.

THINGS THAT AREN’T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN: Disappearances, hauntings, spontaneous human combustion. All the stuff that makes good filler in tabloids and ghost books. We will study a wide variety of stories, try to categorize them and then see if we can understand how these tales got started. Perhaps there will still be real mysteries when we are done.

THINGS WE AREN’T SUPPOSED TO KNOW: Great and spooky conspiracy theories. In this section we will not be particularly interested in politics and history but with the truly weird and bizarre. Nazi flying saucers in a hollow Earth and secret Alien invasions are the things we will be studying.
This is a course designed to trace the impact of mass produced automobiles on American culture and the impact of American culture on the invention and production of automobiles. It will be a combination of cultural, economic and technological history.

We will begin with Henry Ford. A survey of the invention of automobiles (and their engines) will quickly lead to a look at the industrial and cultural factors that created the idea of the mass car (Model T). We will then look at how the Model T affected American life.

Next we will survey the growth of the American auto industry in the era before and during World War II. Here we will take a closer look at economic and social interactions between industry, advertising and people. We will also address the changes brought about by the Great Depression. The auto industry was fully involved in war production and we will explore this aspect also.

The majority of the course will cover the American Car Culture as it developed after World War II. We will follow the development of the size and power of the new cars (V-8s and Tailfins). We will explore the new cultures of suburban living and hot rods...the car culture of the 1950s. And we will look at the great changes that occur in the 1960s as performance and efficiency battle it out in the car industries of America.

Toward the end of this era, Europe and Japan begin to play an increasingly larger role in the development of the automobile. Their impact on the auto market in the United States will be another topic covered here.

The 1970s and 1980s see the wild swings between consumerism and commercialism that affect the American automobile industries and the American public. Compact cars, performance versus dependability and the "Japanese Invasion" all make this era important.

Finally we will look at the modern automobile. Its roots go back to all of the things we have studied so far, but the technological innovations of the last 30 years will be at the center of this part of the course.

This course will not just be a litany of model changes and engine development. We will be continually looking at how the car was a major character in how American culture developed since World War II.

Quick looks at topics like the evolution of luxury cars, drag racing, station wagons and the "drive in" craze will provide a significant part of the course material. We will view movies, read novels, and study the ever changing advertising campaigns for "this year's new model".

We will also investigate how some of the great cars of the 1950s have been kept running in places like Cuba. What models are still there? How is the modern world going to affect them?
Cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami have become major business and cultural centers in the United States. Each American metropolis serves as a center of trade, manufacturing, and the arts. These cities often grew around marketplaces, where goods from distant places could be exchanged for local products. Throughout the United States, cities have been founded at the intersections of transportation routes, or at points where goods must shift from one mode of transportation to another, as at river and ocean ports.

This course will examine the strategic location and growth of such cities as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami, and Havana. It will examine how the Industrial Revolution, Prohibition, and the American mob led to the growth and expansion of these cities. Starting in the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution marked a major turning point in American history. It changed American cities more rapidly than any other time period. New York had a population of about 313,000 in 1840 but had reached 4,767,000 in 1910. Chicago exploded from 40,000 to 2,185,000 during the same period. Millions of rural dwellers no longer needed on farms flocked to the cities, where new factories churned out products for the new markets. Such markets were made accessible by railroads and steamships.

Buildings, like the skyscrapers of New York and Chicago, tend to be the most visible elements of the city. Their monumental features give each city its unique character. These tall buildings were not technically feasible until the invention of the elevator and steel-frame construction methods. Skyscrapers are marvels of the real estate market. By building up instead of out they make maximum use of a minimal amount of space in many American cities. These tall office buildings were often constructed by the immigrant population and led to increased employment in such markets as banking, finance, and management. Such architecture shifted the American economy from a country of small firms to one of large corporations.

During the early 20th century, the American mafia also greatly increased its operations after the 18th Amendment, known as Prohibition, was passed in 1919. This amendment was a constitutional ban on the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcohol. Mobsters like Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel, and Meyer Lansky expanded their organized crime operations from New York to Chicago to Las Vegas to Cuba and more.

"City Stories" will trace the development of the major metropolises in the United States and Cuba during the 19th and 20th centuries. Along with reading assignments, students will see films and television programs related to the changing lifestyles, political structures, and American mafia in these cities. Students will also utilize PowerPoint and SimCity software to explore such topics as city architecture, geography, urban planning, culture, and crime.
Celebrate Sinatra 2016

THORNTON-DONOVAN SCHOOL
CEN TURY OF 
Sinatra 
1915–1998

9.25 HOBOKE N, NJ  ★  10.11 ALTERED FEAST DAY OF SAINT FRANCIS  ★  10.16 BROOKLYN, NY

FROM HOBOKEN TO HOLLYWOOD
THORNTON-DONOVAN SCHOOL

2.12 – 19 LOS ANGELES, CA & LAS VEGAS, NV  ★  4.22 – 30 MIAMI, FL & HAVANA, CUBA
United Nations
INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY

September 21

On September 21st the United Nations calls upon all nations and all people to partner in peace. The International Day of Peace was established in 1981. T-D’s practice of the September 21st date began over 20 years ago. It’s the UN’s hope that all nations and people honor a cessation of hostilities and commemorate the day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace. This is what inspired T-D to put peace in the forefront on September 21st.

Throughout the day there will be many different venues saluting peace. All will be available to students, parents, and guests. Early in the morning George Schulte from Spirit Sky Drum in Freeport, NY will be at T-D’s White House to empower and enlighten all K-12 T-D students and create a possible realization of a higher power for them.

Later in the morning on the tennis courts Chiemi Miyamoto will give a Peace Performance. Miyamoto is from Hiroshima and has been vital and instrumental in fostering student exchange and promoting Japanese-American friendship. Her performance will incorporate lots of calligraphy, considered by many as the world’s foremost art form.

Student speakers, parent speakers, student performers, and parent performers will all focus on peace. There will be lots of music and song.

T-D’s featured main speaker will be Joel Rosow from John Jay College in the City. He is from the Department of Counseling and played a critical role in last year’s Glory Days as he led 100 T-D students in mediation exercises.

Later in the afternoon T-D will dedicate its own Dove of Peace. Miyamoto will christen it and the inscribed words written on a brass plaque will be read. The words appear here for the reader to see.

On September 21st, 2015, the UN’s International Peace Day, T-D implanted this Dove as a link between the U.S. and Japan. This Dove of Peace was blessed by Chiemi Miyamoto from Hiroshima. Pictured on the wall above is the Tori Shrine from Miyajima. The Shrine, a World Heritage site, has existed since 1168. It serves as a link between our world and the spiritual world. The Dove of Peace is now a part of T-D’s Outdoor Sculpture Park.

The entire afternoon’s program will conclude with a Dove Release and a trumpet solo by Jubilant Johnny.
As T-D closes its official school year with graduation, its ambassadorial activities take center stage. As many T-D families were regaling and enjoying the success that graduation puts in focus, several others were packing their bags for places far from America’s shores.

Almira Bubesi got to see Arezzo, something that my daughter Lauren, is still jealous of as she was T-D’s liaison person traveling there a year before. Mrs. Bubesi was accompanied by D.J. West, Michael Fanelli, Alex Cuzzi, Marius and Mazin Fawzy, Sonali Rai and Andrey Gordon. Within this publication is an article written by T-D senior Michael Fanelli entitled Da Milano Alla Toscana: Arezzo.

Doug Fleming was the other travel study person as he flew off to Tokyo and continued on to Hiroshima with ten student diplomats — Sophia Ventresca, Maya Dominguez, Rayaan Ba, lovely lady Lin Lu Qin, Mabel Takona, Cecile McIntosh, Max Sutton, Calum Macphee, Liam Gorbett and Joanna deGramont Teyssonniere.

No one is more hospitable than the Japanese and their host family members continue to outdo themselves each year. My itinerary was unlike any other of my three prior visits. I had many conversations with the principal of Sera High School, Mr. Kentaro Hori. I also had a good meeting with Mr. Katsuya Morinibu, the former principal of Sera. It was good to see Mr. Sogo, Mr. Sayo, Mr. Okuda and the Kurihara family once again. Mr. & Mrs. Norifumi Tono made themselves available for dinner along with Mrs. Inoue and Mr. & Mrs. Nobuyoshi Mitsumoto. Chiemi Miyamoto made a guest appearance and took me to a very entertaining drum concert. Before I left for home I had an elegant lunch with Kumiko Inoue and Mr. Miyajima. All these activities and events were born six years ago courtesy of Mr. Toshio Nakamura who lives in Rye, New York and has been an active alumnus and patron of Sera High School for decades.

I got to several new venues this time around. Sera-Nishi Junior High School was one and Kozan Junior High another. Then there was the Fukuyama Castle and a car museum, along with a visit to the JFE Steel Corp. A closing party was held at the Sera Kosui Farm where each and every host family prepared lunch for their American guests and where America’s ten T-D diplomats thanked their Japanese hosts.

Visits to Sera High School are annual and should be a vital part of both schools future. This exchange and the one in Arezzo should simply be and remain as T-D staples.