SHEIKH MOHAMED BIN ZAYED UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM (SMUSP)

Key Academic Course Offerings
Class of 2009-2010

OPTION 1: One Year-Long Course
“The Relationship of Government and Religion” (12 classes 2009-10)
Instructor: NYU President John Sexton

This course, offered during the SMUSP inaugural year of 2008-09, will again be taught by John Sexton, President of NYU and former Dean of NYU’s Law School. It will focus on a topic on which he has been a major academic voice: the relationship of government and religion, with a particular emphasis on the way the United States, acting principally through its Supreme Court, has addressed this issue. President Sexton has taught this course for twenty years to undergraduates at NYU; it is designed to familiarize students with the workings of the American Constitutional system (especially the role of the courts), and to teach the skills of critical analysis, close reading of text, and careful writing. Because the course moves beyond the substance of the material to the broader intellectual skills involved, it appeals to students in a wide range of disciplines, although it would not be appropriate for students with no interest in the subject. Students must be prepared to invest a great deal of time preparing for class; a written paper of five to six pages is required for most classes, and the readings for each class are extensive. Additionally, they must be willing to participate in the classroom debate and be subject to rigorous questioning by the professor.

OPTION 2: Two Short Courses

Part 1: “Political Power in Modern America” (six classes – fall 2009)
Instructor: Political Strategist Robert Shrum

This course will consist of an overview of American democracy and power and five case studies of U.S. presidential elections from 1968 to the present. The instructor, Robert Shrum, has been at the center of Democratic politics longer than virtually any other operative. He was involved in more than 30 winning Senate races and was senior strategist for the Gore 2000 and Kerry 2004 presidential campaigns. Shrum is a Senior Fellow at NYU’s Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and author of the 2007 bestseller, No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner.

Part 2: “Main Trends in American Foreign Policy” (six classes – spring 2010)
Instructor: Journalist/Author James Traub

President Bush entered office as a self-proclaimed “realist,” and left as an alleged “Wilsonian.” President Obama has vowed to restore “pragmatism” without losing sight of America’s values. What do these terms mean, what are their intellectual origins, and how have they developed over time? The class will read some of the chief foreign policy texts of the last century, and seek to apply them to today’s world.

James Traub is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine, where he has been covering international affairs for the last decade. In recent years he has written from Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, India, the Congo, Mali, Sierra Leone, Angola, Sudan and elsewhere. His two most recent books are The Best Intentions: Kofi Annan And The UN in The Era of American World Power and The Freedom Agenda: Why America Must Spread Democracy (Just Not The Way George Bush Did).