HUMANITIES (HUMS)

* HUMS 027a / LITR 027a / WGSS 027a, Six Pretty Good Selves  Marta Figlerowicz and Ayesha Ramachandran
Through the prism of thinking about the self, this course provides first-year students with an intensive introduction to studying the humanities at Yale. The course is anchored around six trans-historical models of thinking about selfhood: the ideal self, the lover, the revolutionary, the convert, the solipsist, and the social climber. We range widely across genres, media, periods, and geographies: from Plato's Symposium to Machado de Assis's Epitaph for a Small Winner, from the ghazals of Hafez to the Kamasutra. We also make extensive use of Yale’s rich manuscript archives, historical object collections, and art galleries and devote sustained attention to improving students' academic writing skills. Friday sessions will alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU  1½ Course cr

* HUMS 060a, Novel Novels  Brianne Bilsky
Stream of consciousness. Metafiction. Intertextuality. Typographic experimentation. These are some of the innovative narrative techniques that authors have used to push the boundaries of fiction over time. Why does literary innovation happen? How has the development of fiction been influenced by developments in other fields such as psychology, art, philosophy, or physics? What does it mean to say that a novel is novel? This course addresses such questions by taking an interdisciplinary approach to looking closely at several innovative novels from the early twentieth century to the present. As we move from modernism to postmodernism and on to the present moment, we not only explore the ways that novels may engage creatively with other fields but also how they are in dialogue with literary history itself. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* HUMS 068b / ENGL 068b, Speculative Fiction and Film  Staff
Study of how speculative ideas about race and gender, good and evil, and religion and culture reflect and influence changing ideas about what it means to be human, with special attention to Afrofuturist texts. Authors include Samuel Delany, N.K. Jemisin, Liu Cixin, Frank Herbert, & Ursula K. LeGuin. Major films include Akira, Get Out, La Jetee, and the video work of Janelle Monae. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* HUMS 073a, Classical Storytelling in the Modern World  Brian Price
In his seminal work Poetics, Aristotle first identified the observable patterns and recurring elements that existed in the successful tragedies and epic poems of his time, as he posed the existential query: Why do we tell stories? And his illuminating analysis and conclusions are still just as meaningful and relevant today in our contemporary dramatic narratives, our movies, plays, and Netflix binges-of-the-week. In this seminar, we examine Aristotle’s observations and conclusions and relate them to the contemporary stories we consume and enjoy today. By doing so, we identify the universal principles that all good stories share, investigate how these principles connect us all despite cultural, ethnic, and geographical differences, learn how to incorporate Aristotle’s precepts into our own creative expression and communication—and most importantly, explore the vital function of storytelling, why we tell them, what makes a good one, and how to best tell one effectively. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU RP

* HUMS 096a, Collecting History: "Treasures" of Yale  Anna Franz
This course considers the concept of “treasure” by visiting nearly all of Yale’s galleries, museums, and library special collections. We explore questions around how these objects and materials were created, how they came to be at Yale, and the considerations and compromises that make up collections of cultural heritage materials. We learn what these objects say about themselves, their creators, their users, and their collectors. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

HUMS 115a / LITR 101a, Purposes of College Education  Pericles Lewis
College is a crucial institution in which our society works through its expectations for young people. The first half of this course explores some of the purposes that have been ascribed to college, including development of personal character, participation in a community, preparation for citizenship, and conversation with others on intellectual matters. The second half touches on the social and economic contexts of college education, including the history of the curriculum, the role of social class, the cost of higher education, and career preparation. We read Plato's Republic, a key text for the philosophy of education, in its entirety. Other readings from Aristotle, Confucius, Bhagavad-Gita, Virginia Woolf, Martin Luther King, Max Weber. Lectures are designed for interactive conversation. Preference for first-year and sophomore students, but all students are welcome.  HU  0 Course cr

* HUMS 127a / ENGL 129a / LITR 168a / THST 129a, Tragedy in the European Literary Tradition  Katie Trumpener
The genre of tragedy from its origins in ancient Greece and Rome through the European Renaissance to the present day. Themes of justice, religion, free will, family, gender, race, and dramaturgy. Works might include Aristotle’s Poetics or Homer’s Iliad and plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca, Hrotsvitha, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Racine, Büchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Wedekind, Synge, Lorca, Brecht, Beckett, Soyinka, Tarell Alvin McCraney, and Lynn Nottage. Focus on textual analysis and on developing the craft of persuasive argument through writing.  WR, HU

HUMS 129a / CLCV 129a / HIST 159a / NELC 326a / RLST 158a, Jesus to Muhammad: Ancient Christianity to the Rise of Islam  Stephen Davis
The history of Christianity and the development of Western culture from Jesus to the early Middle Ages. The creation of orthodoxy and heresy; Christian religious practice; philosophy and theology; politics and society; gender; Christian literature in its various forms, up to and including the early Islamic period.  HU
* HUMS 120b / LITR 130b, How to Read  Rudiger Campe and Hannan Hever  
Introduction to techniques, strategies, and practices of reading through study of lyric poems, narrative texts, plays and performances, films, new and old, from a range of times and places. Emphasis on practical strategies of discerning and making meaning, as well as theories of literature, and contextualizing particular readings. Topics include form and genre, literary voice and the book as a material object, evaluating translations, and how literary strategies can be extended to read film, mass media, and popular culture. Junior seminar; preference given to juniors and majors.  

* HUMS 139a / MUSI 157a, Western Philosophy in Four Operas 1600-1900  Gary Tomlinson  
This course intensively studies four operas central to the western repertory, spanning the years from the early 17th to the late 19th century: Monteverdi’s Orfeo, Mozart’s Don Giovanni, Wagner’s Die Walküre (from The Ring of the Nibelungs), and Verdi’s Simon Boccanegra. The course explores the expression in these works of philosophical stances of their times on the human subject and human society, bringing to bear writings contemporary to them as well as from more recent times. Readings include works of Ficino, Descartes, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Douglass, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Adorno. We discover that the expression of changing philosophical stances can be found not only in dramatic themes and the words sung, but in the changing natures of the musical styles deployed.  

* HUMS 140b / NELC 121b, The Hero in the Ancient Near East  Kathryn Slanski  
Exploration of the interaction of religion, history, and literature in the ancient Near East through study of its heroes, including comparison with heroes, heroic narratives, and hero cults in the Bible and from classical Greece.  

* HUMS 162b / FREN 388b, Feminine Voices in French Literature  R Howard Bloch and Pierre Saint-Amand  
An exploration of women’s voices in French literature from the Middle Ages to the mid-twentieth century. The specificity of the feminine voice, the plurality of feminine voices, love and sexuality, and social and professional identity. Authors include Marie de France, Marguerite de Navarre, Francoise de Graffigny, Maryse Condé, and Marguerite Duras.  

HUMS 180a / ITAL 310a / LITR 183a, Dante in Translation  Staff  
A critical reading of Dante’s Divine Comedy and selections from the minor works, with an attempt to place Dante’s work in the intellectual and social context of the late Middle Ages by relating literature to philosophical, theological, and political concerns. No knowledge of Italian required. Course conducted in English.  

* HUMS 184b / AMST 184b / ENGL 437b, Writing and Reading Biography  Karin Roffman  
The art of biography explored through groundbreaking examples, with particular emphasis on contemporary texts that explore the lives and work of artists. Topics on biographical theory and practice include: the balance of life and work; the relationship between biographer and subject; creative approaches to archives and research; and imaginative narrative strategies. Some classes take place at the Beinecke Library and there are some visits by working biographers. Students must complete an original biographical project by the end of the semester.  

* HUMS 185a / ENGL 419a / HSAR 460a, Writing about Contemporary Figurative Art  Margaret Spillane  
A workshop on journalistic strategies for looking at and writing about contemporary paintings of the human figure. Practitioners and theorists of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Formerly ENGL 247.  

* HUMS 193a / HIST 265Ja, Screening the Past  Stuart Semmel  
An interdisciplinary study of cinematic representations of the historical past. Films that treat historical events realistically; others that deliberately present history as it did not happen. Standards that can be applied to judge history on the screen; lessons for evaluating history on the page.  

* HUMS 211a / RLST 265a, Fate and Chance in Art and Experience  Noreen Khawaja  
This seminar discusses shifts in how the unchosen is conceived and how it is valued, across a range of contemporary fields and historical models—from Greek tragedy to contemporary performance art, from Protestant aesthetics of fate and grace to the I Jing and its interpreters, from mathematical and physical approaches to chance to the rise of astrology. Students consider when and where we ourselves operate with a belief in something like fate. The goal to explore whether and how a contemporary concept of fate may come into focus.  

* HUMS 220b / HIST 289Jb / HSAR 399b / HSHM 407b, Collecting Nature  Paola Bertucci  
A history of museums before the emergence of the modern museum. Focus on: cabinets of curiosities and Wunderkammern, anatomical theaters and apothecaries’ shops, alchemical workshops and theaters of machines, collections of monsters, rarities, and exotic specimens.  

* HUMS 221b / HIST 210Jb, Hobbes and Galileo: Materialism and the Emergence of Modernity  William Klein  
Hobbes considered himself a disciple of Galileo, but as a systematic philosopher and ideologue during a period of civil unrest in England, he no doubt produced something that Galileo, a Tuscan astrophysicist and impassioned literary critic, was not entirely responsible for: an absolutist theory of the modern state situated within an eschatological time frame. In this course we will reflect on the relation between Galileo’s anti-Aristotelian physics and Hobbes’ system by reading key texts by Galileo and Hobbes along with an array of interpretations and criticisms of Hobbes that will serve to situate Hobbes in early modern currents of thought in science, religion and politics, while at the same time situating us in contemporary ideological debates about the origins of modernity.
On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the upheavals of 1968, this seminar looks at the Latin American cultural and political discourses of liberation throughout the sixties, with an eye at assessing their aftermath and their legacy today. While the language that characterized the foundation of the nation-states in the 19th century was emancipation, in the second part of the twentieth century, and particularly around 1968, Latin America embraced the world discourse of liberation. This seminar examines languages of liberation in an array of disciplines and artistic practices from South and Central America as well as the Caribbean. We explore regional debates that were also inserted in the larger discourse of the anti-colonial struggles of the global South. Topics include Philosophy of liberation (Dussel), Theology of liberation (the 1968 Council of Bishops in Medellin, Colombia), Theater of the oppressed (Boal), Pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire), Cinema of liberation (manifestos of third cinema), the New Song protest movements across the region (from Violeta Parra in Chile to Tropicalismo in Brazil), anti-colonialism in the Caribbean (Panon), anti-neocolonialism (dependency theory, internal colonialism), Indigenous liberation (from the Barbados declarations to the Lacandon jungle declarations), experimental “boom” literature (Cortázar) etc. HU

Survey of the literary tradition of the Arab-Islamic world (West Asia, North Africa, and Muslim Spain), a textual conversation among diverse authors from late antiquity to the Mamluk period. Prose and poetry from the Qur’an to the Arabian Nights; attention to the interdependence of the works and their cultural setting, the agendas authors pursued, and the characters they portrayed. HU

Drawing on English-language literature, art, and history-writing since 1800, this class explores how the past can illuminate and complicate the ways we perceive the present. We begin with the geopolitical and social revolutions of the 1800s as seen through essays and fictions by George Eliot, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and Thomas Carlyle, and end with the memoir-as-history of Hazel Carby’s Imperial Intimacies (2019). Along the way, we explore a variety of approaches to making the past come alive in the present; through the “what if” posed by alternate history speculations, through didactic history in fact and fiction imagined for children, the use of the past as a site of romance, and through visual media like paintings and cinema. Throughout the course, we address questions like: how does fiction work to interpret the past? How does our interpretation of the past reflect and help us process present day concerns? Is the past best imagined as a foreign country full of exotic difference to the present, as a mirror to ourselves? HU TR

A psychological study of love, marriage, and family through literature, visual arts, and music, from the ancient world to mid-century America. An over-arching theme is the protean human potential for adaptation, innovation, and creativity by which couples and families struggle to thrive in the face of opposing forces, both internal and external. In this seminar, we study these themes not only as they have been treated in different parts of the world at different times, but also the means offered by each of the arts for their portrayal. HU

This Beinecke-intensive course considers the published works of living poets alongside the processes they used to create them: drafts, letters, journals, fragments, objects and other artworks that were directly or indirectly part of their artistic development. The course includes the participation of some of the poets themselves, a generation of writers who grew up with an acute awareness that their papers would someday be in a library. That long-term recognition of a public future for often seemingly private thoughts and ideas gives these papers particularly vital value and interest. The kinds of casual phrases and inclusions that were a crucial part of postwar American poetry one sees being worked out in poets’ attitudes of curiosity and attention toward works-in-progress, collaborative experiments and correspondence. Like the poets themselves, this course takes the Beinecke archives as primary not secondary to the production of late 20th and early 21st century poetry. An aspect of the course is the opportunity to talk with multiple generations of poets about their processes of creation, collection and organization and to capture their vision of archives as distinct from (and not merely preparatory to) publication. WR, HU

How and why contemporary societies continue to symbolize sacred and profane meanings, investing these meanings with materiality and shaping them aesthetically. Exploration of “iconic consciousness” in theoretical terms (philosophy, sociology, semiotics) and further exploration of compelling empirical studies about food and bodies, nature, fashion, celebrities, popular culture, art, architecture, branding, and politics. HU, SO

This is a course on the interrelations between philosophical and literary writing beginning with the English Revolution and ending with the beginnings of Romanticism. We read major works in empiricism, political philosophy, and ethics alongside poetry and fiction in several genres. Topics include the mind/body problem, political ideology, subjectivity and gender, and aesthetic experience as they take philosophical and literary form during a long moment of historical change. WR, HU

The course is a semester-long study of the quintessential big Russian novel, Leo Tolstoy’s War and Peace, about Napoleon’s failed 1812 war against Russia. War and Peace (1865-1869) is a sweeping panorama of nineteenth-century Russian society, a novel of profound philosophical questions, and an unforgettable gallery of artfully drawn characters. Reading the novel closely, we pose the following questions. In what ways is this patriotic war epic also an imperial novel? What myths does it destroy and construct? How does it combine fiction and history? What forces drive history, as it unfolds in the present? What are the limits of individual agency, and how much do emperors and generals control the fates of nations and armies? Finally, a question that is never too broad for Tolstoy: what is a
meaningful, well-lived life? We explore these questions while refining our tools of literary analysis and situating the novel in its historical context and in our contemporary world. Secondary materials include Tolstoy’s letters, contemporary reviews, maps, and historical sources, as well as readings in political theory, philosophy, international relations, and literary criticism. All readings and class discussions in English. No prerequisites required. Both WR and non-WR sections are offered. WR, HU TR

* HUMS 264b / HIST 256b, Imagining the Body Politic: Constitutional Art and Theory from Antiquity to the Present  William Klein
Do visual representations of social and political principles have a peculiar power to produce, reproduce, and disturb social and political relations? To what extent do some works of political theory seem to presuppose an imaginative construct, in particular one based on human bodies and their parts? Can we identify the birth of the modern state through an examination of key images of the body politic? Have the machine or network or program taken over the function of the body metaphor in more recent times? Does visualizing the principles and orders of society and politics elicit new critical awareness and reaction, or blindness and obedience? Does republican art differ fundamentally in this regard from monarchial—or fascist or communist or anarchist or neoliberal—art? HU

HUMS 270a / CHNS 200a / EALL 200a / EAST 240a, The Chinese Tradition  Staff
An introduction to the literature, culture, and thought of premodern China, from the beginnings of the written record to the turn of the twentieth century. Close study of textual and visual primary sources, with attention to their historical and cultural backdrops. Students enrolled in CHNS 200 join a weekly Mandarin-language discussion section. No knowledge of Chinese required for students enrolled in EALL 200. Students enrolled in CHNS 200 must have L5 proficiency in Mandarin or permission of the course instructor. HU TR o Course cr

HUMS 272b / EALL 256b / EAST 358b / GLBL 251b / LITR 265b, China in the World  Jing Tsu
Recent headlines about China in the world, deciphered in both modern and historical contexts. Interpretation of new events and diverse texts through transnational connections. Topics include China and Africa, Mandarinization, Chinese America, science and technology, science fiction, and entrepreneurship culture. Readings and discussion in English. HU

* HUMS 274a / NELC 352a, The Education of Princes: Medieval Advice Literature of Rulership and Counsel  Shawkat Toorawa
In this course we read “mirrors for princes,” a type of political writing by courtiers and advisors. The genre flourished in the courts of medieval Europe and the Islamic world. We learn about the ethical and moral considerations that guided (or were meant to guide) rulers in their conduct, in the formulation of their policies, and about theories of rule and rulership. The works we read are from several cultural, religious, and political traditions, and include: Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor; Einhard, Life of Charlemagne; Erasmus, Education of a Christian Prince; Ibn al-Muqaffa’, Kalila and Dimnah, John of Salisbury, Policriticus: Book of the Stateman; Machiavelli, The Prince; Nizam al-Mulk, The Book of Government. All texts are in English translation. Instructor permission is required. HU

HUMS 277b / HIST 231b, What was Enlightenment?  Isaac Nakhimovsky
A survey of eighteenth-century European intellectual life, considered in its social and cultural contexts and with attention to its historical legacies, focusing on responses to emerging global networks of trade, finance, and empire. HU TR

* HUMS 279a / HIST 292a / PLSC 286a, Democracy and the French Revolution  Isaac Nakhimovsky
The French Revolution of 1789 and its legacies, as viewed through the late-eighteenth-century debates about democracy, equality, representative government, and historical change that shaped an enduring agenda for historical and political thought in Europe and around the world. WR, HU

* HUMS 290b / JDST 223b / PLSC 307b, Trials of Uncertainty  Norma Thompson
Is the demise of the trial at hand? The trial as cultural achievement, considered as the epitome of humanistic inquiry, where all is brought to bear on a crucial matter in an uncertain context. Truth may be hammered out or remain elusive, but the expectation in the court case has been that the adversarial mode works best for sorting out evidentiary conundrums. Inquiries into issues of meaning of the trial, its impartiality, and challenges to its endurability. The role of character, doubt, and diagnosis explored in Sophocles, Plato, Cicero, Burke, Jane Austen, Tocqueville, and Kafka, as well as in twentieth-century trials, films, documentaries, and twenty-first-century medical narratives. WR, HU TR

* HUMS 313b / HIST 212b, Philosophy of Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe  Marci Shore
This is a seminar in the field of European intellectual history, based on primary sources. It focuses on how philosophers, novelists, sociologists, and other thinkers developed and articulated a philosophy of dissent under communism. More specific topics include the relationships between temporality and subjectivity and between truth and lies, and the role that existentialism played in formulating philosophical critiques of repression. Readings consist of a mixture of philosophical and literary works from the Soviet Union, East Germany and the lands in-between. Potential authors include Merab Mamardashvili, Danilo Kiš, Józef Tischner, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroś, Ladislav Hejdánek, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Leszek Kołakowski, Gajo Petrović, Norman Manea, Lev Kopelev, Igor Pomerantsev, Tomas Vendova. HU

* HUMS 323a / HIST 236a, Truth and Sedition  William Klein
The truth can set you free, but of course it can also get you into trouble. How do the constraints on the pursuit and expression of “truth” change with the nature of the censoring regime, from the family to the church to the modern nation-state? What causes regimes to protect perceived vulnerabilities in the systems of knowledge they privilege? What happens when conflict between regimes implicates modes of knowing? Are there types of truth that any regime would—or should—find dangerous? What are the possible motives and pathways for self-censorship? We begin with the revolt of the Hebrews against polytheistic Egypt and the Socratic questioning of democracy, and end with various contemporary cases of censorship within and between regimes. We consider these events and texts, and
their reverberations and reversals in history, in relation to select analyses of the relations between truth and power, including Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Brecht, Leo Strauss, Foucault, Chomsky, Waldron, Zizek, and Xu Zhongrun. WR, HU

* HUMS 327a / ENGL 263a, The Victorian Political Novel  Stefan Markovits
The engagement of the Victorian novel with the world of politics. Emphasis on how systems interact with individual agents to make stories and how methods such as realism, romance, and the courtship plot portray the mechanics of government. Units on revolution and riot (Dickens and Gaskell), reform (Eliot and Trollope), and anarchy (James and Conrad). WR, HU

* HUMS 330b / GMAN 227b / LITR 330b / PHIL 402b, Heidegger's Being and Time  Martin Hagglund
Systematic, chapter by chapter study of Heidegger's Being and Time, arguably the most important work of philosophy in the twentieth-century. All major themes addressed in detail, with particular emphasis on care, time, death, and the meaning of being. HU

* HUMS 336a / E&EB 336a / HSHM 453a, Culture and Human Evolution  Gary Tomlinson
Examination of the origins of human modernity in the light of evolutionary and archaeological evidence. Understanding, through a merger of evolutionary reasoning with humanistic theory, the impact of human culture on natural selection across the last 250,000 years. HU, SC

HUMS 339a / HIST 271a / RSEE 271a, European Intellectual History since Nietzsche  Staff
Major currents in European intellectual history from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth. Topics include Marxism-Leninism, psychoanalysis, expressionism, structuralism, phenomenology, existentialism, antipolitics, and deconstruction. HU

* HUMS 353b / FREN 350b, Baudelaire  Thomas Connolly
An undergraduate seminar on the life and work of one of the greatest poets of all time, and founder of modernity, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Readings include œuvre de jeunesse, his collection of poems in verse, Les fleurs du mal, his collection of poems in prose, Le spleen de Paris, as well as his writings on fashion, contemporary culture, drugs, the arts, especially painting, his translations from English and American including Edgar Allan Poe, his private journals, the infamous late writings on Belgium and the Belgians, as well as his rare attempts at theater. His afterlives in literature, painting, music, dance, film, translation, and philosophy. Secondary materials including but not limited to Benjamin, Bonnefoy, Derrida, Fondane, Sartre. Readings in French, discussions in English. Ability to read in French is necessary. WR, HU

* HUMS 358a / RUSS 305a, Modernist Paris and Moscow  Katerina Clark
This interdisciplinary, comparative course unsettling the notion of Moscow's marginality and Paris's centrality from the viewpoint of early 20th century literature, visual art, film, performance, and architecture. The course demonstrates the ways in which Modernist movements in Moscow and Paris were intimately connected and mutually influenced through decades of artistic exchange and competition. Paradigm-shifting artists, writers, and cultural figures like Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Paul Robeson, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Le Corbusier, Langston Hughes, Marina Tsvetaeva, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Walter Benjamin are only a few points of contact between these two epicenters of European modernism. Both Moscow and Paris, sometimes at odds and at other times in collaboration, confronted political and aesthetic questions related to imperial conquest and exoticism, revolution and abstraction in art and language, liberations from race and gender, the march of war and technology, new conceptions of the body, urban imaginaries, and life lived as art. In this course, we explore these very topics in modernism through close reading and visual analysis of works by and/or related to Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Charles Baudelaire, Symbolists, Walter Benjamin, Futurists, Kazimir Malevich, Meyerhold, the Ballets Russes, Josephine Baker, Jane and Paulette Nardal, Constructivists, Alexander Rodchenko, Surrealists, Aimé Césaire, Négritude, Alexandra Kollontai, Sonia Delaunay, and Varvara Stepanova, among others. No knowledge of Russian is required. HU

HUMS 381a / MUSI 380a, Jazz in America 1900-1960  Brian Kane
A course on key moments in the history of jazz in America until 1960 with special focus on the role of jazz within broader streams of American cultural life; improvisation; jazz as popular music and as art music; the racial politics of jazz; and its artistic achievements.

* HUMS 427b / ENGL 456b / JDST 316b / LITR 348b, The Practice of Literary Translation  Robyn Creswell
This course combines a seminar on the history and theory of translation (Tuesdays) with a hands-on workshop (Thursdays). The readings lead us through a series of case studies comparing, on the one hand, multiple translations of given literary works and, on the other, classic statements about translation—by translators themselves and prominent theorists. We consider both poetry and prose from the Bible, selections from Chinese, Greek, and Latin verse, classical Arabic and Persian literature, prose by Cervantes, Borges, and others, and modern European poetry (including Pushkin, Baudelaire, and Rilke). Students are expected to prepare short class presentations, participate in a weekly workshop, try their hand at a series of translation exercises, and undertake an intensive, semester-long translation project. Proficiency in a foreign language is required. HU

* HUMS 428b / ENGL 483b / JDST 343b / LITR 305b, Advanced Literary Translation  Robyn Creswell
A sequel to LITR 348, The Practice of Literary Translation. Students apply to this workshop with a project in mind that they have been developing, either on their own or for a senior thesis, and they present this work during the class on a regular basis. Practical translation is supplemented by readings in the history of translation practice and theory, and by the reflections of practitioners on their craft. These readings are selected jointly by the instructor and members of the class. Topics include the history of literary translation—Western and Eastern; comparative approaches to translating a single work; the political dimension of translation; and translation in the context of religion and theology. Class time is divided into student presentations of short passages of their own work, including related key
readings; background readings in the history of the field; and close examination of relevant translations by accomplished translators. Students receive intensive scrutiny by the group and instructor. Prerequisite: LITR 348.

* HUMS 430a / ENGL 248a / HSHM 476a / LITR 483a / PHIL 361a, Thought Experiments: Connecting Literature, Philosophy and the Natural Sciences  Paul Grimstad

The course looks closely at the intersection of literature, philosophy and natural science through the lens of the thought experiment. Do thought experiments yield new knowledge about the world? What role does narrative or scene setting play in thought experiments? Can works of literary fiction or films function as thought experiments? Readings take up topics such as personal identity, artificial intelligence, meaning and intentionality, free will, time travel, the riddle of induction, “trolley problems” in ethics and the hard problem of consciousness. Authors may include Mary Shelley, Plato, Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, H.G. Wells, Rene Descartes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rivka Galchen, Alan Turing, Hilary Putnam, as well as films (The Imitation Game) and television shows (Black Mirror). Students should have taken at least one course involving close analysis of works of literature or philosophy. WR, HU

* HUMS 443a / HIST 232Ja / JDST 270a / MMES 342a / RLST 201a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation  Ivan Marcus

How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies. WR, HU

* HUMS 480a / GMAN 288a / LITR 482a / PHIL 469a, The Mortality of the Soul: From Aristotle to Heidegger  Martin Hagglund

This course explores fundamental philosophical questions of the relation between matter and form, life and spirit, necessity and freedom, by proceeding from Aristotle’s analysis of the soul in De Anima and his notion of practical agency in the Nicomachean Ethics. We study Aristotle in conjunction with seminal works by contemporary neo-Aristotelian philosophers (Korsgaard, Nussbaum, Brague, and McDowell). We in turn pursue the implications of Aristotle’s notion of life by engaging with contemporary philosophical discussions of death that take their point of departure in Epicurus (Nagel, Williams, Scheffler). We conclude by analyzing Heidegger’s notion of constitutive mortality, in order to make explicit what is implicit in the form of the soul in Aristotle. HU