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 065a / EDST 065a, Education and the Life Worth Living  Matthew Croasmun
Consideration of education and what it has to do with real life—not just any life, but a life worth living. Engagement with three visions of different traditions of imagining the good life and of imagining education: Confucianism, Christianity, and Modernism. Students will be asked to challenge the fundamental question of the good life and to put that question at the heart of their college education. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. 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 RP

* 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 communications—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. HU

* 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  Staff
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 or b / ENGL 129a or b / LITR 168a or b / THST 129a or b, Tragedy in the European Literary Tradition  Staff
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 dramaticuty. 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
By learning about Austen’s musical milieu, we open up the musical lives of Regency-era women and the “middling sort,” while becoming collections, alongside recent scholarship and modern film adaptations, which taken together raise a series of interdisciplinary questions.

This course takesJane Austen as a guide to the world of early nineteenth-century music culture in Britain, exploring through her novels the relationships between music, gender, and class in the decades around 1800. We approach this period of music history by delving into how “regular people”—especially women—consumed, curated, and created music in their everyday lives. Austen, an accomplished musicologist, theorist of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Students complement classroom studies with visits to the Yale Babylonian Collection and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, as well as with film screenings and guest speakers. Students also learn fundamentals of Near Eastern writing and thought of ancient Israel. The works’ cultural and historical setting in the ancient Near East; the interpretive history of selected passages influential in Western culture. Introduction to a wide range of critical and literary approaches to biblical studies. Students view course lectures, which survey the entire Bible, on line; class time focuses on specific biblical passages and their subsequent interpretation in Jewish and Christian culture.

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.

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.

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.
more attuned to the social critiques embedded in Austen’s representations of music, ultimately enriching our engagement with the novels themselves. The ability to read musical notation is not required, but will be helpful.  HU

* 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.  HU

* HUMS 200b / ENGL 205b / LITR 195b / MUSI 462b, Medieval Songlines  Ardis Butterfield
Introduction to medieval song in England via modern poetic theory, material culture, affect theory, and sound studies. Song is studied through foregrounding music as well as words, words as well as music.  WR, HU

* HUMS 211a / LITR 386a / 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.  HU

* HUMS 218b / ENGL 208b, Neoplatonism Across Time and Faith  Feisal Mohamed
Engaging in questions of Platonic influence may seem to support a traditional, unitary view of Western culture unified by its roots in ancient Greece. This course poses a strong challenge to that narrative. By focusing on the Platonism of late antiquity, we in fact engage in a profound re-mapping of cultural and intellectual traditions—classical, medieval, early modern, and modern—less centered on Athens and Rome and taking into its ken Alexandria, Damascus, and Baghdad. The course also explores engagements of the Neoplatonic tradition across all three Abrahamic faiths.  HU

* HUMS 220b / HIST 289Jb / HSAR 395b / 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.  WR, HU TR

* HUMS 224b / 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.  HU

* HUMS 229a / LAST 431a / LITR 431a / SPAN 431a, Latin American Languages of Liberation: The Long Sixties  Moira Fradinger
This is a multi-media seminar that studies the Latin American cultural and political discourses of liberation throughout the sixties, with an eye at assessing 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 (both Spanish and Portuguese American music), anti-colonialism in the Caribbean (Césaire, Fanon), anti-neocolonialism (dependency theory, internal colonialism), Indigenous liberation (from the Barbados declarations to the Lacandon jungle declarations), experimental “boom” literature (Cortázar) etc.  HU

HUMS 232a / LITR 178a / MMES 201a / NELC 156a, Classics of the Arabic-Islamic World  Shawkat Toorawo
Survey of the literary tradition of the Arabic-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

* HUMS 237a / ENGL 292a, Modernities: Past and Present in Fiction since 1789  Katja Lindskog
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
* **HUMS 244a, Love, Marriage, Family: A Psychological Study through the Arts**  Ellen Handler Spitz and R Howard Bloch
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

* **HUMS 255a / HIST 260a / LITR 463a / PHIL 227a, Literature and Philosophy, Revolution to Romanticism**  Jonathan Kramnick
This course is a semester-long study of the quintessential big Russian novel, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1865-1869) is a sweeping panorama of nineteenth-century Russian society, a novel of profound philosophical questions, and an unforgettable array 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

* **HUMS 255a / HIST 260a / LITR 463a / PHIL 227a, Literature and Philosophy, Revolution to Romanticism**  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 monarchical—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  
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 353a, 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, Politeia: Book of the Statesman; 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 292Ja / 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 295b / 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 315b / HIST 212Jb, 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 Kuron, Ladislav Hejdanek, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Leszek Kołakowski, Gajo Petrović, Norman Manea, Lev Kopelev, Igor Pomarantsev, Tomas Venclova. HU

* HUMS 323a / HIST 236Ja, 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 Stefanie 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 o Course cr

* HUMS 355b / FREN 350b, Baudelaire Thomas Connolly
An undergraduate seminar on the life and work of one 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 356a, Interpretations: Emily Dickinson  Riley Soles

“I’m Nobody!” chants the poet who would not publish or seek literary fame in her lifetime. Now hardly nobody, Emily Dickinson is widely recognized as one of the most original and difficult poets ever to write poetry. This seminar explores a variety of methodological approaches to her work. We close-read a wide range of her poems, seeking to understand important tensions that run throughout her oeuvre, between feeling and intellect, chaos and control, power and passivity, things hidden and revealed, ecstasy and despair, life and death. We also locate Dickinson in her historical moment and personal community, and in the context of important precursors and sources of literary influence (and again), including the Bible, English Romantic poetry, and the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Attention is paid to Dickinson’s identity as a woman writing within and against an inherited tradition of male poets and thinkers, as well as to Dickinson’s relation to other important women writers whom she read, such as George Eliot, the Brontës, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Attention is also paid to the unique materiality and process of Dickinson’s poetic craft. Considerations of these features of her poems, of her innovations in syntax and punctuation, and of the complex history of editing and publishing her work, allows us to question more deeply certain assumed or uncontested categories in the study of poetry, such as lyric, and even “poem” itself. Previous coursework in literature and poetry specifically is helpful, but not necessary.  HU

* HUMS 358a / FREN 365 / RUSS 305a, Modernist Paris and Moscow  Katerina Clark

This interdisciplinary, comparative course unsettles 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, Alexander Kollontai, Sonia Delaunay, and Varvara Stepanova, among others. No knowledge of Russian is required.  HU

* HUMS 380b / ENGL 395b / LITR 154b, The Bible as a Literature  Staff

Study of the Bible as a literature—a collection of works exhibiting a variety of attitudes toward the conflicting claims of tradition and originality, historicity and literariness.  WR, HU RP

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 411b, Life Worth Living  Staff

Comparative exploration of the shape of the life advocated by several of the world’s normative traditions, both religious and nonreligions. Concrete instantiations of these traditions explored through contemporary exemplars drawn from outside the professional religious or philosophical spheres. Readings from the founding texts of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Marxism, and utilitarianism.  HU

* 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 art. 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 Initiation 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