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 029a, Medicine and the Humanities: Certainty and Unknowing  Matthew Morrison
Sherwin Nuland often referred to medicine as “the Uncertain Art.” In this course, we address the role of uncertainty in medicine, and the role that narrative plays in capturing that uncertainty. We focus our efforts on major authors and texts that define the modern medical humanities, with primary readings by Mikhail Bulgakov, Henry Marsh, Atul Gawande, and Lisa Sanders. Other topics include the philosophy of science (with a focus on Karl Popper), rationalism and romanticism (William James), and epistemology and scientism (Wittgenstein). Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

* HUMS 059a, Why the Sublime? Or, The Meaning and Value of Transcendence through Theory, Poetry, and Art  Riley Soles
Have you ever experienced something so powerful you couldn’t possibly describe it? Have you ever felt both strongly attracted to and repulsed by something in a way that defied all logic? This course explores the role, structure, and value of the Sublime as an essential mode of human experience through a variety of theoretical writings, poetic expressions, and artistic outputs, in order to think through not only what the Sublime is but also why we need it. The essential claim of the Sublime, writes Thomas Weiskel, is that we can transcend the human. The etymology of the word suggests moving beyond limits. To study the Sublime, then, is to confront what it means to be human at and beyond our limits, whether those limits are constructed individually, socially, intellectually, emotionally, perceptually, or otherwise. The writers and artists we examine in this course show us that the affective registers of a confrontation with the Sublime include fear, confusion, humility, weakness, despair and (often at the same time) such opposites as courage, clarity, strength, wisdom, and ecstasy. Together we interrogative the conditions and significance of all of these Sublime feelings, and then take what we learn and attempt to investigate the role of the Sublime in our contemporary moment, and through our own personal experience. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

* 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 066b / ENGL 066b, 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 Afroturufist 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 075a, Mastering the Art of Watercolor  Adam Van Doren
An introductory course on the art of watercolor as a humanistic discipline within the liberal arts tradition. Readings, discussions, and studio work emphasize critical, creative thinking through a tactile, “learning by doing” study of the watercolor medium. Students analyze and imitate the classic techniques of J. M.W. Turner, John Singer Sargent, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Edward Hopper, among others. Studio components include painting en plein air to understand color, form, perspective, composition, and shade and shadow. Basic drawing skills recommended. Enrollment limited to first-year students. 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  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 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, Lorrca, Brecht, Beckett, Soyinka, Tarell Alvin McCrane, and Lynn Nottage. Focus on textual analysis and on developing the craft of persuasive argument through writing. WR, HU

* HUMS 128a / NELC 128a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures  Samuel Hodgkin
This course is an introduction to Near Eastern civilization through its rich and diverse literary cultures. We read and discuss ancient works, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, Genesis, and “The Song of Songs,” medieval works, such as A Thousand and One Nights, selections from the Qur’an, and Shah-nama: The Book of Kings, and modern works of Israeli, Turkish, and Iranian novelists and Palestinian poets. 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 systems, and consider questions of tradition, transmission, and translation. All readings are in translation. Permission from the instructor required. WR, HU

* HUMS 130b / 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. HU

HUMS 133b / JDST 110b / RLST 145b, The Bible  Christine Hayes
The writings common to both Jewish and Christian scripture examined as diverse and often conflicting expressions of the religious life 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. HU

* HUMS 139a / MUSI 137a, 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. HU

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. WR, HU 0 Course cr
* 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. Readings and discussion in English. WR, HU

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. HU o Course cr

* 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. HU

* 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 theoreticians of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Formerly ENGL 247. WR, HU

* HUMS 186b / MUSI 186b, Music & Jane Austen Jessica Peritz
This course takes Jane 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 musician herself, wove music into her novels in ways that reveal much about contemporary practices of (and prejudices against) music. We focus on three of Austen's novels (Pride & Prejudice, Sense & Sensibility, Emma) and excerpts from her music manuscript collections, alongside recent scholarship and modern film adaptations, which together raise a series of interdisciplinary questions. By learning about Austen's musical milieu, we open up the musical lives of Regency-era women and the "middling sort," while becoming 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 190b / ENGL 192b / FILM 240b / LITR 143b, World Cinema Marta Figlerowicz
Development of ways to engage films from around the globe productively. Close analysis of a dozen complex films, with historical contextualization of their production and cultural functions. Attention to the development of critical skills. Includes weekly screenings, each followed immediately by discussion. HU

* HUMS 192a / 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 193a / GMAN 278a / LITR 129a, Thinking Literature in German Modernism Staff
Ever since literature left its ancillary position in the service of extraneous creeds, ideologies and educational purposes or, in the eyes of some, became their substitute, it had to rethink itself. Reflections about its own raison d'etre and how it relates to the world politically, philosophically, and emotionally became a primary substratum of literary modernism. This is particularly true for modernism in German language contexts where some of the major theories about literature originated and where philosophy, politics and literature had been closely intertwined for centuries. Following general reflections on the term Modernism and its variations in different linguistic and national contexts (Die Moderne, la modernité, modernismo) as well as its relation to Realism, to the Avant Garde and to Postmodernism, this course explores some of the major works of German Modernism. Among the texts to be discussed are works by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Else Lasker-Schüler, Franz Kafka as well as selected poetry and short prose by authors ranging from Expressionists to poets writing in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Special attention is given to intertextual references to the literary tradition and, in this context, to the self-reflexive dimension of the modernist writings. HU

* HUMS 196b / CPLT 468b / LITR 410b / SPAN 318b / SPAN 618b, The End of the World Jesus Velasco
In this course we study different kinds of narratives about the end of times and its consequences in Iberian and Latin American cultures. We include political, theological, social, and environmental narratives across periodizations in Iberian and Latin American Cultures. Instruction is in Spanish. 15. HU

* HUMS 199a / ENGL 315a, American Romanticism: Emerson to Ashbery Benjamin Barasch
This seminar examines three great poets and shapers of the American imagination—Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Wallace Stevens—with some attention to their inspirer Ralph Waldo Emerson and inheritor John Ashbery. Through close reading, we address their explorations of mind and world, authentic individuality, the possibility of human connection, the idea of nature, and the quest for meaning and value in modern life. In developing an account of the romantic strain in American art and experience, we also reflect on its continuing viability as an aesthetic mode, form of life, and source of American identity. 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 262a, Fate and Chance in Art and Experience  Noreen Khawaja
This seminar is co-taught with Sheila Heti. It 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  Feisel 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 Platonicism 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 399b / HSHM 407b, Collecting Before the Museum  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 systematical 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  Staff
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 (Cesaire, Fanon), anti-neocolonialism (dependency theory, internal colonialism), Indigenous liberation (from the Barbados declarations to the Lacandon jungle declarations), experimental “boom” literature (Cortazar) etc.  HU o Course cr

* HUMS 231b / ENGL 206b, Poetic Influence from Shakespeare to the Twenty-First Century  Riley Soles
What does it mean to read poetry as a poet? Or, as someone interested in how poems get made? In what ways do poets read and interpret the poets who came before them? How do they attempt to fashion old material into new poetic visions? How do poets hear echoes from the past and amplify, distort, and transform what they hear into their own unique voices in the present? And what’s really at stake in such transformations? (Why write a poem, after all?) This course reads a trajectory of poetic influence in English language poetry that stretches from Shakespeare into the twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the development of a variety of specific tropes across poems and across poets. We also read various essays, prefaces, and letters, written by poets, that attempt to articulate what a poem is and does, and what the value of reading and writing poetry may be, for anyone.  HU

* HUMS 233a / LITR 178a / MMES 201a / NELC 156a, Classics of the Arabic-Islamic World  Shawkat Toorawa
Arabic-Islamic civilization has produced numerous works that would make it onto almost anyone’s list of wondrous books. In this course, we will read a selection of (or from) those books and study the literary and intellectual cultures that produced them in an attempt to deepen and nuance our understanding of Islamic civilization. Readings will include the Qur’an, classical Arabic poetry, Jahiz’s epistles, the Maqamat of Hariri, al-Ghazali, the Shahnameh, Leyli ve Mejnun, the Conference of the Birds, the Hang Tuah Epic, Aisha al-Bauniyyah’s Sufi poetry, and much else besides. All readings in translation.  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?  

* 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 overarching 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.  

* HUMS 245A / AMST 241A / ENGL 256A, Poets and their Papers  Karin Roffman  
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.  

* HUMS 246A / FILM 393A / Hsar 405A / HSHM 472A, Early Modern Media  Marisa Bass and John Peters  
How did ideas move in the early modern world across time and place, between people and things? Looking beyond art history’s traditional understanding of “medium” as referring to what a work of art is made from, this seminar explores the broader range of “media” that were central to discourse and debates about faith, politics, and the natural world during a period of great technological innovation and global expansion, as well as violence, upheaval, and uncertainty. Focusing on Dutch art, science, and thought during the long seventeenth century—a context in which experiments with media at home and encounters with media from abroad were especially charged, our discussions range from optics to navigation, theology to mathematics, landscape to microsphere, clocks to cannons, and shells to flowers. Readings both historical and theoretical complement several visits to study works firsthand in nearby collections.  

* HUMS 247B / SOCY 352B, Material Culture and Iconic Consciousness  Jeffrey Alexander  
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.  

Dialogue constitutes an integral part of human experience and culture ever since antiquity. Whether as a rhetorical or a dramatic device, written or oral, fictional or not – dialogue substantiates the core of any intersubjective communication, building bridges between the self and the Other while maintaining them as two separate entities. This seminar explores the form and function of dialogue through a wide range of theoretical and literary texts, focusing on a set of social, hermeneutical, poetic, and political questions. Specific attention is given to literary cases of failed dialogues and miscomprehension, aiming at the unique ability of the literary text to draw our attention beyond the limits of human communication and language. Readings include texts by Plato, Schlegel, Novalis, Bachtin, Levinas, Buber, Gadamer, Parsons, Kleist, Beckett, Melville, Schnitzler, Celan, Bachmann., and others.  

* HUMS 252A / ENGL 346A / RLST 233A, Poetry and Faith  Christian Wiman  
Issues of faith examined through poetry, with a focus on modern poems from 1850 to the present. Poems from various faith traditions studied, as well as secular and antireligious poetry.  

HUMS 255A / HIST 260A / LITR 252A / RSEE 312A / RUSS 312A, Tolstoy’s War and Peace  TR  Staff  
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.
education. We begin the course with an introduction to some of the ancient and contemporary arguments about the relationship between education and democracy. Next, we trace the history of American political thought and its influences on this question. What political theories emerged about the kind of education required for a liberal-democratic society? Finally, we turn to some works that challenge the compatibility of education and democracy. When and how might the goals of education and democracy conflict? HU TR

This course explores how certain novels, which prima facie may not appear to be political, become political novels through the act of censorship. Through a selection of novels drawn from different cultures and historical moments, we attempt to think through the relation between fiction and politics and how censorship can transform an aesthetic object into an organ of political criticism and resistance. In particular, we concentrate on how censorship—justified by religious, sexual, or political motives and beliefs—reorganizes the reception of a fictional work in the public sphere such that it becomes an acceptable (imaginary?) site to think about what is (in reality?) most dangerous and illegitimate in different cultures. Among the authors whose censorship trials we examine are: G. Flaubert, de Sade, D. H. Lawrence, M. Twain, V. Nabokov, and K. Vonnegut. HU

* HUMS 263a / EP&E 372a / PLSC 329a, Thucydides  Daniel Schillinger
In this seminar, we undertake a careful examination of Thucydides’ so-called History of the Peloponnesian War in its entirety. Central problems include the psychological and structural causes of war, the relation of justice to necessity, the susceptibility of democracy to imperialism and demagoguery, and the experience of war itself. We also engage with the secondary literature on Thucydides. WR, HU

* HUMS 264b / HIST 250jb, 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 267b / ENGL 214b, Moby-Dick  David Bromwich
This seminar engages in the interpretation of a single great book, Moby-Dick by Herman Melville. Some attention is given to its historical and literary context, with readings in Emerson, Hawthorne, Webster, and Douglass, Shakespeare and Montaigne, and Melville’s own earlier and later writings. Mostly we discuss the book itself, for its portrait of the energy and madness of American industry and enterprise, its criticism of American ideals, and its allegory of the romantic will. 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 0 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’s international relations and global footprint, Mandarinization, Chinese America, science and technology, science fiction, and entrepreneurship culture. Readings and discussion in English. HU

* HUMS 274a / LITR 388a / NELC 325a, 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, Politicatus: 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 276a / GMAN 300a / LITR 414a / SOCY 301a, Non-Cynical Social Thought  Paul North
Living together is difficult. How do some people do it? How can we do it less badly, or much better, or in the very best way? In this seminar we read sources from several disciplines that describe possible modes of conviviality. Much social thought is cynical, starting from where we are not and mapping why we haven’t gotten there. Some social thought is revolutionary, looking for an exit, casting hopes toward the future. What both of these lack is contents. Without ignoring the massive difficulties involved, we try to fill this in with images of viable and livable groups, collectives, festivals, syndicates, congregations, planets. 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 284a / EALL 203a / LITR 198a, The Tale of Genji
James Scanlon-Canegata
A reading of the central work of prose fiction in the Japanese classical tradition in its entirety (in English translation) along with some examples of predecessors, parodies, and adaptations (the latter include Noh plays and twentieth-century short stories). Topics of discussion include narrative form, poetics, gendered authorship and readership, and the processes and premises that have given The Tale of Genji its place in “world literature.” Attention will also be given to the text’s special relationship to visual culture. No knowledge of Japanese required. A previous college-level course in the study of literary texts is recommended but not required. WR, HU TR

* HUMS 295b / JDST 223b, 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 212Jb, Philosophy of Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe
Marcia 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 Kuroń, Ladislav Hejdanek, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Leszek Kolakowski, Gajo Petrović, Norman Manea, Lev Kopelev, Igor Pomerantsev, Tomas Vendlova. 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 433a, 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 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 / ENGL 212a, 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 agon), 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 338a / FREN 363 / 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 Mayakovskyy, 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 375a / CLCV 353a / LITR 353a / WGSS 351a, Greek Tragedy and Psychoanalysis** Nebojsa Todorovic
What do ancient fifth-century Athens and turn-of-the-(twentieth-)century Vienna have in common? In fact, psychoanalysis' development was intertwined with Freud's interpretations of classical Greek tragedy, and Greek tragedies in turn can shed light on psychoanalytic concepts in excess of Freud's readings. The juxtaposition of these two worlds allows us to understand each with a fresh perspective. And this is what we study in this class: we read and interpret the best-known tragic plays by ancient playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in dialogue with key concepts of psychoanalytic criticism. Well-established questions that Greek tragedy raises about gender politics, the evolution of democracy, the progressive disintegration of the Athenian polis, the construction of citizenship and foreignness, the influence of rhetoric and sophistry is reframed in dialogue with Freud's (and his followers') redefinitions of language, the unconscious, the self, trauma, violence, and gender. The goal of this course is to provide students with a clear understanding of the historical evolutions of these two forms of cultural production while also engaging in more theoretical and comparative work of literary interpretation and critical theorization. Considering the pivotal role that both psychoanalysis and Greek tragedy held in the development of later currents of thought (including postcolonial studies, Black Studies, feminist theory, queer theory, and Black studies), particular attention is paid the afterlives of the Freudian method and classical tragedy. **WR, HU**

* **HUMS 380b / ENGL 385b / LITR 154b, The Bible as a Literature** Leslie Brisman
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 388b / ENGL 280b / LITR 380b / PHIL 385b / RLST 380b, Philosophies of Life** Nancy Leevne
Study of works that challenge and provoke philosophies of life — how to live, what to live for, what life is. The point of departure is a selection of writings from the Hebrew Bible and moves from there to modern philosophical and literary re-imaginings and alternate realities. What are questions to which a philosophy of life is the reply? Insofar as a philosophy of life is itself a question, what is the repertoire of replies offered in our texts? What is your reply? Readings from the Bible (Genesis, Job), Shakespeare, Spinoza, Diderot, Kierkegaard, Woolf, Camus, Baldwin, Marilynne Robinson, and Achille Mbembe. **WR, HU TR**

* **HUMS 380b, Ecstasy** Riley Soles
This course explores the structure and role of ecstasy in a variety of religious and literary contexts, from ancient Greek beliefs and practices to modern American poetry and postmodern theory. Ecstasy derives from the Greek ekstasis, meaning "to stand outside (of oneself)," and the term has been used in various cultural and historical contexts to describe modes of experiential and intellectual transcendence in traditions of ritual, mysticism, performance, hermeneutics, literary theory and criticism, poetry, and poetics. The course takes primarily structural, psychological, and phenomenological approaches to the topics of ecstasy and the ecstatic in religion and literature, in order to think through what ecstasy "is," when and why it happens, what it achieves, and how it does so. The course explores the relationship between ecstasy and other religious categories such as doctrine, praxis, ethics, faith, and service. Likewise, we locate ecstasy as a major element in poetic traditions, and its relationship to metaphor, poetic influence, demonic possession, and the Sublime. **HU**
* HUMS 391a / GMAN 391a / JDST 280a / LITR 125a / RLST 374a, The Bible in German-Jewish Modernist Literature  
Staff  
Biblical references in modernist literary works illustrate literature’s potential to transform ancient forms and conceptions into driving forces of renewal. This renewal concerns both literature and the Bible. Their encounter in modernist texts rarely occurs in a straightforward fashion. While the modernist literary reception of Biblical material occasionally does appear as pious affirmation or outright rejection, more characteristically, it alters, displaces, or distorts the original Scriptures. Not only do these transformations enact modernism’s basic injunction to “make it new,” but they also illuminate its complex relationship to tradition as such. The course explores this dynamic in the work of major German-Jewish modernists such as Franz Kafka, Else Lasker-Schüler and Paul Celan. None. HU

* 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 nonreligious. 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  
Peter Cole  
A sequel to LITR 348 or its equivalent, this course brings together advanced and seriously committed students of literary translation, especially (but not only) those who are doing translation-related senior theses. Students must apply to the class with a specific project in mind, that they have been developing or considering, and that they will present on a regular basis throughout the semester. Discussion of translations-in-progress are supplemented by short readings that include model works from the world of literary translation, among them introductions and pieces of criticism, as well as reflections by practitioners treating all phases of their art. The class is open to undergraduates and graduate students who have taken at least one translation workshop. By permission of the instructor. Prerequisite: LITR 348. HU

* 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 433a / HIST 232Ja / JDST 280a / 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 471a or b, Special Studies in the Humanities  
Paul Grimstad  
For students who wish to pursue a topic in Humanities not otherwise covered. May be used for research or for directed reading under the guidance of one or more faculty advisers. In either case a term paper or its equivalent is required, as are regular meetings with the adviser or advisers. To apply, a student should present a prospectus and a bibliography signed by the adviser or advisers to the director of undergraduate studies. Enrollment limited to juniors and seniors majoring in Humanities.

* HUMS 480a / GMAN 288a / LITR 482a / PHIL 460a, 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

* HUMS 491a or b, The Senior Essay  
Paul Grimstad  
Independent library-based research under faculty supervision. To register, students must consult the director of undergraduate studies no later than the end of registration period in the previous term. A written plan of study approved by a faculty adviser must be submitted to
the director of undergraduate studies by November 16, 2021, if the essay is to be submitted during the spring term. The final essay is due at noon on April 8, 2022 for spring-term essays. For essays to be completed in the fall term, a rough draft is due October 25, 2021, and the final essay due November 29, 2021. RP