HUMANITIES (HUMS)

* HUMS 005a / NELC 005a, The Ancient Egyptian Empire of the New Kingdom  Nadine Moeller
For most of the duration of the New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the ancient Egyptians were able to establish a vast empire and became one of the key powers within the Near East. This course is an introduction to the history, archaeology and literary sources of one of the most dynamic periods of ancient Egyptian history. We investigate the development of Egyptian foreign policies and military expansion, which affected parts of the Near East and Nubia to the south. We also examine and discuss topics such as ideology, imperial identity, political struggle and motivation for conquest and control of wider regions surrounding the Egyptian state as well as the relationship to other powers and their perspective on Egyptian rulers, as, for example, described in the famous Amarna letters, the world’s earliest diplomatic correspondence. Throughout the semester, we consider the different sources that have survived in the archaeological and textual record for understanding Egypt’s first empire within its ancient geopolitical context. All primary texts are read in translation. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

* HUMS 024a / EALL 020a / LITR 031a, Six Pretty Good Poems  Lucas Bender
This seminar that serves as an introduction to the Humanities. The course considers the way that poetry, across cultures and historical eras, allows authors to navigate the challenging relationship between the universal and the particular. We read six poems that are considered among the best in their respective, and very different, traditions. We also make extensive use of Yale’s rich manuscript archives, historical object collections, and art galleries, and we devote sustained attention to improving academic writing skills. Friday sessions alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. Part of the "Six Pretty Good Ideas" program. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU 1½ Course cr

* HUMS 025a, Six Pretty Good Buildings  Michael Faciejew
Through the lens of “worldmaking,” this course provides students with an intensive introduction to studying the humanities at Yale. The course is anchored by six trans-historical spatial models for thinking about the history of ideas: the Capitol, the Library, the Ship, the Factory, the Museum, and the House. Covering a range of historical epochs and geographies—from Greek antiquity to contemporary Dakar—as well as genres and media—including philosophical treatises, the romance novel, films, and exhibition catalogues—these six building “types” provide a foundation for questions about how societies and individuals organize value systems. They also provide concrete, material frameworks for confronting theoretical proposals with the diversity of human experiences. Key texts include Homor’s *The Odyssey*, Song Yingxing’s *Tiangong Kaiwu*, and Hannah Arendt’s *Human Condition*. Canonical texts from the traditional repertoire of the “Great Books” are constellation with nonwestern and contemporary perspectives that rethink the political and ethical imperatives of the humanities today. Friday sessions alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. This course is part of the "Six Pretty Good Ideas" program. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU 1½ Course cr

* HUMS 026a / NELC 006a, Six Pretty Good Journeys  Shawkat Toorawa
Through the lens of travel accounts—by merchants, envoys, scholars, pilgrims and wanderers—this course provides first-year students with an intensive introduction to studying the humanities at Yale. The course is anchored by accounts of trans-continental journeys to six regions: China, Egypt, the Holy Land, the Indian Ocean, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. Key texts include: *The Periplus* (Greek, 1st-century), Ibn Fadlan’s *Mission to the Volga* (Arabic, 10th-c.), Benjamin of Tudela’s *Itinerary* (Hebrew, 12th-c.), Abd al-Latif’s *Physician on the Nile* (Arabic, 12th-c.), Marco Polo’s *Travels* (Franco-Venetian, 13th-c.), Margery Kempe’s *Autobiography* (English, 14th-c.). We also read works by contemporary travelers Emily O’Dell and Tim Mackintosh-Smith. All provide a foundation for us to explore the ways we think about ourselves and the “other,” home, the unfamiliar and wondrous—in short, the diversity of human experience. We 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 alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Freshman Seminar Program. WR, HU 1½ Course cr

* HUMS 027a / LITR 027a, Six Pretty Good Selves  Ayesha Ramachandran and Marta Figlerowicz
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 or b / LITR 028a or b, Medicine and the Humanities: Certainty and Unknowing  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 035b / HIST 025b / PLSC 035b, The American Death Penalty  Lincoln Caplan
This first-year seminar focuses on the U.S. Supreme Court’s 44-year experiment in regulating the American death penalty. The aims of the course are to have students learn about the workings and history of the system of capital punishment in the U.S., which is one of the most controversial elements of American criminal justice, and decide whether, in their view, the experiment is succeeding or failing – why and how. For students interested in the criminal justice system. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  

* 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 interrogate 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.  

* HUMS 065a / EDST 065a, Education and the Life Worth Living  Matthew Croasman
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.  

* HUMS 069a, Dismantling Narratives of Empire  Victoria Hallinan
Modern empires depicted themselves as hegemonic purveyors of progress whose endeavors contributed to a “civilizing mission.” These narratives frequently used specific ideas around race, religion, gender, technology, and politics to justify their violent acquisition of places and peoples. Through this course, we apply a critical lens to the material expression of these narratives in a variety of forms—from music to film, architecture to comic books—including engaging with specific objects from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Yale University Art Gallery. We delve into the power of narrative, who it left out, and how it continues to impact our understanding of nations today. In turn, students construct a response to imperialistic narratives as part of honing skills posing and supporting an argument. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  

* HUMS 070a / ENGL 070a / HUMS 030, Self and Other  Benjamin Barasch
Questions of self and other, identity and difference, are at the heart of personal experience and present social conflicts, from campus debates about power and privilege, to movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too, to the resurgence of ethno-nationalism. But what do we mean by “self” and “other”? What is the self and how does it come into being? What connects us to or differentiates us from various “others” (family, friends, lovers, strangers, people of other backgrounds or political orientations)? To what extent are individuals defined by group identity? What makes me “me” and what is involved in truly recognizing another person? What sort of access do we have to other minds – and to our own? How do love and hate shape our relations with others? Is “self and other” the best framework for understanding our being in the world? This class explores these questions through readings in modern literature, philosophy and social theory. Authors include William Wordsworth, G. W. F. Hegel, R. W. Emerson, Walt Whitman, Frederick Douglass, Emily Dickinson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Nella Larsen, D. W. Winnicott, James Agee and Walker Evans, Simone de Beauvoir, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Stanley Cavell, Angela Davis. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  

* 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.  

* HUMS 092a / RLST 012a, Divine Law in Historical Perspective  Christine Hayes
Exploration of the divergent notions of divine law in Greco-Roman antiquity and biblical Israel; the cognitive dissonance their historical encounter engendered and attempts by Jewish, Christian, and contemporary secular thinkers to negotiate competing claims. Topics include: debates over the attributes and nature of divine law versus human law; the grounds of divine law’s authority; law as a religious expression versus law as debasement of the divine-human relationship; the impact of divine law debates on secular legal theory. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.
* HUMS 095a, Certain Uncertainties: Literature, Physics, Philosophy  Brianne Bilsky

Why does the universe exist? What is the nature of reality? Who are we? How do we know? This course attempts to address such uncertainties by looking at three seemingly disparate disciplines: literature, physics, and philosophy. Throughout the twentieth century, significant advances were made in each of these fields. In literature, the modernists and postmodernists changed the way we read and write. In physics, modern cosmology and quantum mechanics profoundly affected our understanding of the universe’s origins and the nature of reality. In philosophy, new schools of thought such as structuralism and poststructuralism challenged our perception of language and meaning. By placing such seemingly separate fields of study and some of their signature advances in conversation, this course not only aims to explore certain uncertainties but also to underscore the value of a liberal arts education. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* 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, Lorca, Brecht, Beckett, Soyinka, Tarell Alvin McCraney, and Lynn Nottage. Focus on textual analysis and on developing the craft of persuasive argument through writing.  WR, HU

* HUMS 128a / NELC 128a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures  Kathryn Slanski

This lecture 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.  WR, HU

* HUMS 130a or b / LITR 130a or b, How to Read  Staff

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 133a / JDST 110a / RLST 145a, 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 134a / ENGL 154a / EREN 216a / LITR 194a, The Multicultural Middle Ages  Ardis Buttefield and Marcel Elias

Introduction to medieval English literature and culture in its European and Mediterranean context, before it became monolingual, canonical, or author-bound. Genres include travel writing, epic, dream visions, mysticism, the lyric, and autobiography, from the Crusades to the Hundred Years War, from the troubadours to Dante, from the Chanson de Roland to Chaucer. Formerly ENGL 189.  WR, 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 144a / CLCV 206a / HIST 217a, The Roman Republic  Andrew Johnston

The origins, development, and expansion of Rome from the earliest times to the deaths of Caesar and Cicero. Cultural identity and interaction; slavery, class, and the family; politics, rhetoric, and propaganda; religion; imperialism; monumentality and memory; and the perception and writing of history. Application of literary and archaeological evidence.  HU

* HUMS 179b / ENGL 377b, Shakespeare’s Political Plays  David Bromwich

Reading and interpretation of selected histories and tragedies from Richard II to The Tempest with emphasis on the tension between individual freedom and political obligation.  WR, HU
HUMS 180a / ITAL 310a / LITR 183a, Dante in Translation  Christiana Purdy Moudarres
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

* HUMS 184a / AMST 184a / ENGL 437a, 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 theorists of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Formerly ENGL 247.  WR, HU

* HUMS 192a / HIST 299Ja, Intellectuals and Power in Europe  Terence Renaud
The role of intellectuals in politics, with a focus on social, cultural, and political upheavals in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Whether intellectuals betray a higher spiritual calling when they enter politics or merely strive to put their own theories into practice. Modern answers to the question of why ideas and intellectuals matter.  HU

* HUMS 200b / ENGL 209b / 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 201b / FREN 240b / LITR 214b, The Modern French Novel  Alice Kaplan and Maurice Samuels
A survey of major French novels, considering style and story, literary and intellectual movements, and historical contexts. Writers include Balzac, Flaubert, Proust, Camus, and Sartre. Readings in translation. One section conducted in French.  HU TR

HUMS 206b / ENGL 191b / LITR 318b / MMES 215b / NELC 210b, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now  Robyn Cresswell
Exploration of Arabian Nights, a classic of world literature. Topics include antecedents, themes and later prose, and graphic and film adaptations.  HU TR

* HUMS 208a / ENGL 257a / GMAN 312a / LITR 482a, Poe and Kafka  Paul North and Caleb Smith
Some mysteries seem unresolvable by science or religion. For instance, there is the mystery of how people remain hidden from themselves of repressed impulses and buried truths that find expression in fantasies, dreams, and other strange visions. A word for this mystery is the unconscious. Some terms for its literature include the gothic and the grotesque. Our experimental course pursues this mystery by studying two writers working in different languages, in different centuries, in a variety of minor, unprestigious genres: Edgar Allan Poe and Franz Kafka. We use tales and other short texts by each writer to illuminate the other’s techniques for examining the psychological and political unconscious.  WR, HU

* HUMS 209b / ENGL 213b / LITR 487b, The Poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley  David Bromwich
An exploration of the major poems of William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, with emphasis on the diverse imaginings required for lyrics and longer works such as The Prelude and Prometheus Unbound.  WR, HU

* HUMS 210b / ITAL 317b / LITR 180b / WGSS 317b, Women in the Middle Ages  Christiana Purdy Moudarres
Medieval understandings of womanhood examined through analysis of writings by and/or about women, from antiquity through the Middle Ages. Introduction to the premodern Western canon and assessment of the role that women played in its construction.  HU TR

HUMS 213b / ENGL 150b / LITR 339b / THST 262b, Global Shakespeares: Race, Gender, and the Idea of the Human  Ayesha Ramachandran
Shakespeare today is a global phenomenon: over five hundred years after his death, the playwright’s legacy continues to flourish with new performances, reworkings, appropriations, and adaptations continuously produced across the world in a range of languages and across various media. Once exported along with the ideologies and practices of empire, Shakespeare’s works have now become an index for the complex histories of colonialism and postcolonialism as well as a crucial site for studying processes of racialization and the universalizing idea of “the human.” How did Shakespeare become global? Was the cultural imagination of his plays always already global, written at a time with the very notion of the modern world as we know it was being shaped? This course explores the political afterlives of “Shakespeare” as a cultural icon and aesthetic touchstone for the Western tradition through a close reading of four plays alongside their adaptations: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Antony and Cleopatra. The course will explore books, novels, manga, comics, memoirs, stand-up comic routines, along with classic stagings of the plays to elucidate the themes that have made Shakespeare global—in particular, questions of race, gender, sexuality, generational conflict, and political intrigue. Authors and directors include Akira Kurosawa, Vishal Bhardwaj, Janet Suzman, Iqbal Khan, James Baldwin, Sulayman Al-Bassam, Tayeb Salih, Preti Taneja, and Derek Walcott. This is the non-intensive writing version of LITR 340 and is worth 1 credit. It meets with LITR 340. Students may earn credit for LITR 339 (1 credit) or for LITR 340 (1.5 credits) but not for both.  WR, HU
This course represents an introduction to the most important philosophical thinkers and texts in Chinese history, ranging from roughly 500 BC–1500 AD. Topics include ethics, political philosophy, epistemology, and ontology. We discuss the basic works of Confucian and Daoist philosophers during the Warring States and early imperial eras, the continuation of these traditions in early medieval “dark learning,” Buddhist philosophy (in its original Indian context, the early period of its spread to China, and in mature Chinese Buddhist schools such as Chan/Zen), and Neo–Confucian philosophy. The course emphasizes readings in the original texts of the thinkers and traditions in question (all in English translation). No knowledge of Chinese or previous contact with Chinese philosophy required. HU TR

* HUMS 215a / LITR 273a, The Poetry of Vision: East and West  Riley Soles

Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of 1755 provides four definitions of the word vision: (1) sight; the faculty of seeing, (2) the act of seeing, (3) a supernatural appearance; a spectre; a phantom, (4) a dream; something in a dream. A dream happens to a sleeping man, a vision may happen to a waking man. A dream is supposed natural, a vision miraculous; but they are confounded. This course explores poetry that deals with any or all of these definitions, across a wide range of cultural and historical contexts, from the visionary, astral journeys of ancient Chinese verse to the visionary, redemptive apocalypse of William Blake, from the fleeting beauty in Japanese haiku to the high Sublime of American shore odes, from the psychedelic sermons of Buddhist scripture to the dream images of Geoffrey Chaucer, from the divine, cosmic manifestation in the Bhagavad Gita to the non-linear, multilayered poetics of Stéphane Mallarmé, from the spiritual and erotic yearnings of Rumi to the romantic and poetic longings of Hart Crane. HU

* HUMS 216a / AFAM 247a / PLST 282a, Democracy and Race in America: Thinking with Tocqueville and Du Bois  Giulia Oskian and Vatsal Naresh

Racial and economic inequalities have remained unresolved problems in American democracy since independence. For this reason, both historian Eric Foner and poet Amanda Gorman recently claimed that American democracy is still unfinished. To what extent and in what ways could pre-civil war America be considered democratic? What challenges did the democratic project face in the aftermath of the civil war and slave emancipation? How do these challenges still influence the American political life? This seminar addresses these questions with the two classical texts that are rarely read together: Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America and W. E. B. Du Bois's Black Reconstruction in America. HU, SO

* HUMS 219a / AMST 215a / HIST 485a / HSHM 217a, Biomedical Futures and Michael Crichton's Monsters  Joanna Radin

What forms of life have been produced by modern science? The literal life-changing technologies that began to emerge after the Second World War also provoked new anxieties. They expressed themselves in the speculative fiction of Michael Crichton in terms of monsters: the virus in The Andromeda Strain, the androids in Westworld, the velociraptors of Jurassic Park, and even the patients maimed by gunshot wounds in ER. Crichton wrote thrilling stories that also asked his readers to consider what monsters humans could make if they didn't stop to consider whether or not they should. This course examines the emergence of modern life science to consider what it would take to produce more life-sustaining futures. HU, SO 0 Course cr

* HUMS 220a / HIST 289Ja / HSAR 399a / HSHM 407a, 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 223b / ENGL 242b, Interpretations: Claude McKay: Race, Religion, Politics, and Queerness  Ernest Mitchell

Claude McKay was the preeminent queer black leftist poet, novelist, and political thinker of the early 20th century. His writings offer an entrée into questions of race, sexuality, and autobiography; literature and literary genres; nationalism and internationalism; colonialism and anti-colonial resistance; religious change and political conversion. This course covers the full range of his many contributions: his Jamaican and American poetry; his socialist articles and essays; his three published novels (Home to Harlem, Banjo, Banana Bottom); his memoir, A Long Way From Home; an urban portrait, Harlem: Negro Metropolis; his posthumously published novels, Romance in Marseille and Amiable with Big Teeth; and a selection of his unpublished essays. HU

* HUMS 224b / HIST 210b, 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 228a / EVST 228a / HIST 450Ja / LITR 345a, Climate Change and the Humanities  Katja Lindskog

What can the Humanities tell us about climate change? The Humanities help us to better understand the relationship between everyday individual experience, and our rapidly changing natural world. To that end, students read literary, political, historical, and religious texts to better understand how individuals both depend on, and struggle against, the natural environment in order to survive. HU

* HUMS 236a / GMAN 248a / LITR 240a / THST 248a, Goethe's Faust  Kirk Wetter and Jan Hagens

Goethe's Faust, with special attention to Faust II and to the genesis of Faust in its various versions throughout Goethe's lifetime. Emphasis on the work in context of Goethe's time and in the later reception and criticism. Reading knowledge of German beneficial but not required. HU TR
* HUMS 241b / AFAM 182b / AMST 286b / ENGL 182b, James Baldwin’s American Scene  Jacqueline Goldsby
In-depth examination of James Baldwin’s canon, tracking his work as an American artist, citizen, and witness to United States society, politics, and culture during the Cold War, the Civil Rights era, and the Black Arts Movement.  HU

* 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.  HU, SO

* HUMS 248a, Monuments and Memorials: Shaping Historical Memories  Virginia Jewiss
Monuments, from the Latin monere, are intended to admonish and advise the viewer. Memorials–placeholders of memory–invite us to remember and reflect. Simultaneously commemorative and cautionary, monuments and memorials aim to speak both to their own moment and to posterity. Yet what they say changes, and the memories they honor are often contested, as recent controversies at Yale and beyond have underlined. Drawing on examples from antiquity to the present, from ancient Egypt to the Elm City, this interdisciplinary seminar explores monuments and memorials as political, cultural, social, and aesthetic expressions, and the ways they operate within and beyond the historical moment in which they were created. Physical manifestations of memory are considered together with literary and historical works that complement and challenge notions of permanence, perpetuity, and power of expression. Current debates about monuments are set alongside the practice of damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome; iconoclasm; and alternative or counter-monuments that subvert the traditional commemorative lexicon. Particular attention is given to monuments at Yale and the New Haven area, with on-site classes.  HU

* HUMS 252b / AMST 346b / ENGL 235b, Poetry and Objects  Karin Roffman
This course on 20th and 21st century poetry studies the non-symbolic use of familiar objects in poems. We meet alternating weeks in the Beinecke library archives and the Yale Art Gallery objects study classroom to discover literary, material, and biographical histories of poems and objects. Additionally, there are scheduled readings and discussions with contemporary poets. Assignments include both analytical essays and the creation of online exhibitions.  WR, HU

* HUMS 253a / 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 to secular and antireligious poetry.  HU

* HUMS 264b / HIST 256Jb, Imagining the Body Politic: Constitutional Art and Theory from Antiquity to the Present  Staff
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  Tina Lu
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 L3 proficiency in Mandarin or permission of the course instructor.  HU, TR

* HUMS 272b / EALL 256b / EAST 358b / GLBL 251b / LITR 265b, China in the World  Jing Tse
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, labor and migration, Chinese America, nationalism and humiliation, and art and counterfeit. Readings and discussion in English.  HU

* HUMS 286a / ER&M 279a / HIST 295Ja / PHIL 433a, Mass Incarceration in the Soviet Union and the United States  Timothy Snyder and Jason Stanley
The Franke Seminar. An investigation of the experience and purposes of mass incarceration in the Soviet Union and the United States in the twentieth century. Incarceration is central to the understanding, if not usually to the self-understanding, of a society. It is thus a crucial aperture into basic questions of values and practices. This course proposes a frontal approach to the subject, by investigating two of the major carceral systems of the twentieth century, the Soviet and the American. Intensive reading includes first-person accounts of the Gulag and American prison as well as scholarly monographs on the causes of mass incarceration in different contexts. Brief account is taken of important comparative cases, such as Nazi Germany and communist China. Guest lectures and guest appearances are an important element of our teaching.  HU, TR

* HUMS 287b / GMAN 373b / HIST 455Jb / WGSS 347b, Resistance in Theory and Practice  Terence Renaud
Exploration of the histories and theories of resistance in the modern world. How liberation movements, guerrillas, and oppressed groups appeal to resistance as an organizational strategy and as moral justification. Readings include Kant, Thoreau, Nietzsche, Luxemburg, Lenin, Gandhi, Fanon, Arendt, Marcuse, Foucault, A. Lorde, Said, and J. Butler. Themes include antifascism to terrorism; violence to nonviolence, the New Left to Black Lives Matter.  HU, TR
This is a seminar in the field of European intellectual history, based on primary sources. It focuses on how philosophers, novelists, sociologists, and other thinkers developed and articulated a philosophy of dissent under communism. More specific topics include the relationships between temporality and subjectivity and between truth and lies, and the role that existentialism played in formulating philosophical critiques of repression. Readings consist of a mixture of philosophical and literary works from the Soviet Union, East Germany and the lands in between. Potential authors include Merab Mamardashvili, Danilo Kiš, Józef Tischner, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroś, Ladislav Hejdanek, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Leszek Kolakowski, Gajo Petrović, Norman Manea, Lev Kopelev, Igor Pomerantsev, Tomas Venclova.

* HUMS 332a / HIST 236a, Truth and Sedition William Klein
The truth can set you free, but of course it can also get you into trouble. How do the constraints on the pursuit and expression of “truth” change with the nature of the censoring regime, from the family to the church to the modern nation-state? What causes regimes to protect perceived vulnerabilities in the systems of knowledge they privilege? What happens when conflict between regimes implicates modes of knowing? Are there types of truth that any regime would—or should—find dangerous? What are the possible motives and pathways for self-censorship? We begin with the revolt of the Hebrews against polytheistic Egypt and the Socratic questioning of democracy, and end with various contemporary cases of censorship within and between regimes. We consider these events and texts, and their reverberations and reversals in history, in relation to select analyses of the relations between truth and power, including Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Brecht, Leo Strauss, Foucault, Chomsky, Waldron, Zizek, and Xu Zhongrjun. WR, HU

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 363a / PLSC 301a, Machiavelli and his Readers Steven Smith
Machiavelli remains the most widely discussed and debated figures in the Western political canon. This course offers a close reading of this two major treatises, the Prince and the Discourses on Livy as well as important sections from Livy’s history of Rome. We then consider influential nineteenth and twentieth century interpreters of Machiavelli from Hegel to Gramsci to Leo Strauss. Prerequisites: DS, Intro to Political Philosophy, or some familiarity with Early Modern Intellectual History. WR, HU, SO

* HUMS 364b / GMAN 343b / LITR 479b, Writing Scenes: Theory of the Literary Act Rudiger Campe
For a long time, thinking about producing literature has been dominated by the legalism of authorship. The notion of the Writing Scene allows to rethink the production of literature in broader ways: technologies of writing, the writing body, systems of writing etc. The course looks at investigations into the act of writing by Benjamin, Blanchot, Foucault, Barthes, Flusser, Latour; theories of cultural production by Cassirer, Jameson, Goody, Ktitter, Bolte, Rheinberger; vignettes of writing scenes in Quintilian, Christine de Pisan, Dante, Descartes, Goethe, Blake, Hegel, Flaubert, Fr. Douglas, V. Wolfe, Kafka, Proust, Cixous. HU

* HUMS 366a / FREN 330a, The World of Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" Maurice Samuels
Considered one of the greatest novels of all time, Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables (1862) offers more than a thrilling story, unforgettable characters, and powerful writing. It offers a window into history. Working from a new translation, this seminar studies Hugo’s epic masterpiece in all its unabridged glory, but also uses it as a lens to explore the world of nineteenth-century France—including issues such as the criminal justice system, religion, poverty, social welfare, war, prostitution, industrialization, and revolution. Students gain the tools to work both as close readers and as cultural historians in order to illuminate the ways in which Hugo’s text intersects with its context. Attention is also paid to famous stage and screen adaptations of the novel: what do they get right and what do they get wrong? Taught in English, no knowledge of French is required. HU

* HUMS 367b / GMAN 304b / LITR 486b, Heimito von Doderer’s The Strudlhof Steps Kirk Wetters
Spanning the fin-de-siècle to the postwar, high modernism and popular fiction, Heimito von Doderer’s classic 1951 novel of the city of Vienna was published in English only recently, in 2021. Unclassifiable in its combination of romanticism, realism, and modernism, The Strudlhof Steps has won over many generations of readers, critics, scholars and other novelists (including recently Daniel Kehlmann, for whom Doderer’s novel is “the best German language novel of the 20th century”). This course undertakes a slow reading of Doderer’s 900-page bestseller, with attention to many relevant contexts, including: the theory and history of the novel, modernism in art and architecture, the complex genesis of The Strudlhof Steps, selections of Doderer’s other writings, the historical context (especially the interwar period, the rise of fascism, and the question of Habsburg nostalgia). Strongly recommended to avid readers of fiction. Knowledge of German is helpful. HU

* HUMS 368b / GMAN 309b / LITR 481b, Alienation, Reconciliation from Hegel to the Ecological Rift Rudiger Campe
Alienation has been explored in social, economic or environmental respects, and thinkers differ widely according to how, where, and when to identify the other of alienation, a non-alienated way of life or reconciliation. This course discusses alienation and reconciliation along these lines in Rousseau, Hegel, Marx; Simmel, Lukács, Sartre; Lefebvre, J.B. Foster, J.W. Moore and others. HU

* HUMS 370a / AFAM 354a / ENGL 351a, Fictions of the Harlem Vogue: Novels, Short Stories, and Novellas of the “Harlem Renaissance” Ernest Mitchell
In this seminar, we examine the major novels, short stories, and novellas of the Harlem Vogue (1923-1934), the first decade of the Negro Renaissance. Key texts by Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, Jean Toomer, and Eric Walrond are central, along with lesser-known works by Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes. We consider critical debates about these texts and their standard designation as part of the
“Harlem Renaissance.” Careful close reading is emphasized throughout; students are guided through a process of archival research and sustained formal analysis to produce a polished critical essay. WR, HU

* HUMS 371b / ENGL 329b / FILM 380 / HSAR 441b / LITR 402b, The Picturebook: Euro-American and Japanese Traditions  Katie Trumpener
Examines the form, history, and preoccupations of the picturebook form from the eighteenth century to the present, juxtaposing Euro-American with Japanese picturebook traditions. HU

* HUMS 372a / GMAN 362a / LITR 489a, Critique and Crisis  Kirk Wettens
In our time, when everyone is suspected of being hyper-critical, it is not surprising that the limits of critique, its function and institutional location are called to question. The idea of “post-critique” has been much discussed in recent years. In order to gain orientation with respect to such concerns, this course develops critical models, primarily from the German tradition, in order to show the great variety of options available beyond the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” Topics include: post-critique, the history of critique/criticism, the Romantic concept of critique, traditional vs. critical theory, historicism, philology vs. hermeneutics, science (Wissenschaft) vs. the critique of positivism. Main protagonists include Kant, Schiller, Schlegel, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Max Weber, Lukács, Husserl, Benjamin, Adorno, Koselleck, Szondi, Gadamer, Gumbrecht, Latour, Felski. HU TR

* HUMS 374a / GMAN 307a / LITR 464a, Greed and Its Discontents: From Aristotle to the Present  Dietrich Thomae and Paul North
Money matters, whether we like it or not. Besides being an economic means, it plays a pervasive role in the lives of individuals and the social fabric at large—a role scrutinized by writers, philosophers, and cultural theorists. By opening up a vast horizon of possibilities, money represents power and desire. It is regarded as an enabler of freedom by some, and as a source of alienation by others. Money is said to be detrimental to social cooperation, as it fuels the “frenzy to achieve distinction” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau). When it comes to greed and its discontent issues of status, recognition, and contempt come into play. Money, which has been called an “abstract” form of happiness (Arthur Schopenhauer), permeates the debates on the intimate relation between well-being, welfare, and wealth. On a macro level, the standings of different social spheres, including the economy, politics, and the realm of intimate relationships, depend on the question of whether “everything is for sale” or not (Debra Satz). In this course, we explore the meaning of money by tracing the arc from Aristotle to the present. HU

* HUMS 380b / ENGL 395b / 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 409a / FREN 403a / LITR 224a, Proust Interpretations: Reading Remembrance of Things Past  R Howard Bloch and Pierre Saint-Amand
A close reading (in English) of Marcel Proust’s masterpiece, Remembrance of Things Past, with emphasis upon major themes: time and memory, desire and jealousy, social life and artistic experience, sexual identity and personal authenticity, class and nation. Portions from Swann’s Way, Within a Budding Grove, Cities of the Plain, Time Regained considered from biographical, psychological/psychoanalytic, gender, sociological, historical, and philosophical perspectives. WR, 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 414a / GMAN 414a / LITR 262a, Georg Büchner’s Revolutions  Dietrich Thomae and Rudiger Campe
Georg Büchner’s (1813-1837) is a work across times and places. In Danton’s Death he reenacts the French Revolution, in the pamphlet Hessian Messenger he calls for revolution in German lands. Büchner’s other, simultaneous, revolution is one of language and literature. In the narrative Lenz and the theater play Woyzeck, Büchner turns the Romanticism of his own time upside down and the two works resurface only ca. 1900 as trail blazers of social naturalism and modernist (postdramatic) theater. Celan, in the Meridian, gives an idiosyncratic account of Büchner’s travel across times and places. The course contextualizes the close reading of Büchner’s work with materials from the French Revolution, early socialists, Marx; French, German, British Romanticism; prose and theater ca. 1900 when Büchner is rediscovered; Celan. HU TR

* HUMS 424b / CGSC 429b / PHIL 492b / PSYC 424b, Metaphysics Meets Cognitive Science: Objects, Causation, Time, and Self  Laurie Paul and Brian Scholl
The premise (and promise) of cognitive science is that we will come to understand ourselves better by integrating the insights and contributions from multiple fields of inquiry. This interdisciplinary project has been especially vibrant when it has explored the intersection of philosophy and psychology (for example when work in ethics integrates empirical work from moral psychology, or when work in the philosophy of mind integrates neuroscientific studies of consciousness). But cognitive science has interacted far less with the study of *metaphysics* – the philosophical exploration of topics such as time, causation, and possibility. This may seem surprising, since there has been a great deal of fascinating empirical research on the mental representations and cognitive processes involved in such topics. Accordingly, this seminar attempts to bridge this gap, exploring potential interactions between these fields. In particular, we explore the possibility of a ‘cognitive metaphysics’, in which each field is enriched by consideration of the other. How might metaphysical theories raise questions or identify concepts of interest to working cognitive scientists? How might empirical studies from cognitive science on the nature of seeing and thinking contribute to the study of metaphysics? Specific topics likely include the ways in which we understand the nature (in both the mind and the world) of space, time, objects, events, causality, persistence, and possibility. (And along the way, we
also consider some more particular topics, such as the asymmetry between past and future experience, the apparent backwards causation in the context of Newcomb’s puzzle, and why the present seems special.) This course is the Shulman Seminar. A previous course other in either philosophy or psychology is presumed.  HU, SO

* HUMS 427b / ENGL 456b / JDST 316b / LITR 438b, The Practice of Literary Translation  Peter Cole
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 430a / ENGL 248a / HSHM 476a / LITR 482a / PHIL 361a, Thought Experiments: Connecting Literature, Philosophy and the Natural Sciences  Paul Grimstad
The course looks closely at the intersection of literature, philosophy and natural science through the lens of the thought experiment. Do thought experiments yield new knowledge about the world? What role does narrative or scene setting play in thought experiments? Can works of literary fiction or films function as thought experiments? Readings take up topics such as personal identity, artificial intelligence, meaning and intentionality, free will, time travel, the riddle of induction, “trolley problems” in ethics and the hard problem of consciousness. Authors may include Mary Shelley, Plato, Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, H.G. Wells, Rene Descartes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rivka Galchen, Alan Turing, Hilary Putnam, as well as films (The Imitation Game) and television shows (Black Mirror). Students should have taken at least one course involving close analysis of works of literature or philosophy.  WR, HU

* HUMS 434a / ITAL 323a, The City of Rome  Virginia Jewiss
An interdisciplinary study of Rome from its legendary origins through its evolving presence at the crossroads of Europe and the world. Significant moments of Roman and world history will be considered through the literature, intellectual history, political science, theology, and arts inspired by Rome.  HU

* HUMS 463b / HIST 428jb / HSHM 477b / RLST 437b, Critical Theories of Science and Religion  Noreen Khawaja and Joanna Radin
This course is an introduction to new thinking about the relationship of science and religion in global modernities. Drawing from work in feminist and indigenous studies, critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and multispecies thought, we explore systematic questions at the intersection of metaphysics, history of science, and politics. How can attending to the role of practice alter our understanding of how knowledge is produced across scientific and religious worlds? What is a world, and who gets to define it? How might a new contract between science and religion reveal fresh possibilities for an ethical response to late capitalism: addressing historic exclusions, structural inequalities, and human-nonhuman relations? Readings may include: Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Kim TallBear, Anna Tsing, Isabell Stengers, Cathy Gere, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, Karen Barad, Robert Bellah, Elizabeth Povinelli, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Aicha Beliso-De Jesus, Marilyn Strathern, Catherine Keller, Abou Farman, Webb Keane.  HU

* HUMS 471a, 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 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

* HUMS 491a, 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