HUMANITIES (HUMS)

* HUMS 037a / LITR 037a, The Limits of the Human  Steven Shoemaker
As we navigate the demands of the 21st century, an onslaught of new technologies, from artificial intelligence to genetic engineering, has pushed us to question the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. At the same time, scientific findings about animal, and even plant intelligence, have troubled these boundaries in similar fashion. In this course, we examine works of literature and film that can help us imagine our way into these "limit cases" and explore what happens as we approach the limits of our own imaginative and empathetic capacities. We read works of literature by Mary Shelley, Kazuo Ishiguro, Richard Powers, Octavia Butler, Ted Chiang, and Jennifer Egan, and watch the movies Blade Runner, Ex Machina, Arrival, Avatar, and Her. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

* HUMS 061a / CLCV 051a / LITR 029a / MUSI 054a / THST 051a, Performing Antiquity  Pauline LeVen
This seminar introduces students to some of the most influential texts of Greco-Roman Antiquity and investigates the meaning of their “performance” in different ways: 1) how they were musically and dramatically performed in their original context in Antiquity (what were the rhythms, the harmonies, the dance-steps, the props used, etc.); 2) what the performance meant, in socio-cultural and political terms, for the people involved in performing or watching it, and how performance takes place beyond the stage; 3) how these texts are performed in modern times (what it means for us to translate and stage ancient plays with masks, a chorus, etc.; to reenact some ancient institutions; to reconstruct ancient instruments or compose “new ancient music”); 4) in what ways modern poems, plays, songs, ballets constitute forms of interpretation, appropriation, or contestation of ancient texts; 5) in what ways creative and embodied practice can be a form of scholarship. Besides reading ancient Greek and Latin texts in translation, students read and watch performances of modern works of reception: poems, drama, ballet, and instrumental music. A few sessions are devoted to practical activities (reenactment of a symposium, composition of ancient music, etc.). Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* HUMS 067b / AMST 070b / ENGL 067b, The Road in Literature and Film  Steven Shoemaker
Stories about journeys are at the heart of some of the most powerful works of art and literature that humankind has produced, from the time of Homer’s Odyssey onward, and the trope of the journey has played an especially prominent role in American literature and film. In this course, we look at modern and contemporary examples of books and films that explore “the road” both as a path to freedom and discovery and as a site of hardship and precarity. Along the way, we examine quests for personal enlightenment, flights from economic and political oppression, and attempts to locate some “elsewhere” that’s more exciting than home. Works of literature are likely to include Walt Whitman’s “Song of the Open Road,” Jack Kerouac’s On the Road, John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath, Muriel Rukeyser’s U.S. 1, Jesmyn Ward’s Sing, Unburied, Sing, and Colson Whitehead’s The Underground Railroad. Films are likely
to include Sullivan’s Travels, It Happened One Night, Easy Rider, Thelma and Louise, and Into the Wild. WR, HU

* HUMS 073a, Classical Storytelling in the Modern World  Brian Price
In his seminal work Poetics, Aristotle first identified the observable patterns and recurring elements that existed in the successful tragedies and epic poems of his time, as he posed the existential query: Why do we tell stories? And his illuminating analysis and conclusions are still just as meaningful and relevant today in our contemporary dramatic narratives, our movies, plays, and Netflix binges-of-the-week. In this seminar, we examine Aristotle’s observations and conclusions and relate them to the contemporary stories we consume and enjoy today. By doing so, we identify the universal principles that all good stories share, investigate how these principles connect us all despite cultural, ethnic, and geographical differences, learn how to incorporate Aristotle’s precepts into our own creative expression and 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 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  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 130a / GMAN 200a / LITR 130a, How to Read  Rudiger Campe and Hannan Hever
Introduction to techniques, strategies, and practices of reading through study of lyric poems, narrative texts, plays and performances, films, new and old, from a range of times and places. Emphasis on practical strategies of discerning and making meaning, as well as theories of literature, and contextualizing particular readings. Topics include form and genre, literary voice and the book as a material object, evaluating translations,
and how literary strategies can be extended to read film, mass media, and popular
culture. Junior seminar; preference given to juniors and majors.  

HUMS 134a / ENGL 154a / FREN 216a / LITR 194a, The Multicultural Middle Ages
Ardis Butterfield 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  
  Staff
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 145a / CLCV 345a, Ancient Greek and Roman Novels in Context  
  Staff
A thorough examination of ancient novels as ancestors to the modern novel. Focus on
seven surviving Greek and Roman novels, with particular emphasis on questions of
interpretation, literary criticism, and literary theory, as well as cultural issues raised
by the novels, including questions of gender and sexuality, ethnicity, cultural identity,
religion, and intellectual culture of the first centuries A.D.  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

* 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
Humanities (HUMS)

* HUMS 224b / HIST 210Jb, Hobbes and Galileo: Materialism and the Emergence of Modernity  William Klein
Hobbes considered himself a disciple of Galileo, but as a systematic philosopher and ideologue during a period of civil unrest in England, he no doubt produced something that Galileo, a Tuscan astrophysicist and impassioned literary critic, was not entirely responsible for: an absolutist theory of the modern state situated within an eschatological time frame. In this course we will reflect on the relation between Galileo's anti-Aristotelian physics and Hobbes' system by reading key texts by Galileo and Hobbes along with an array of interpretations and criticisms of Hobbes that will serve to situate Hobbes in early modern currents of thought in science, religion and politics, while at the same time situating us in contemporary ideological debates about the origins of modernity.  HU

* HUMS 244a, Love, Marriage, Family: A Psychological Study through the Arts  Ellen Handler Spitz and R Howard Bloch
A psychological study of love, marriage, and family through literature, visual arts, and music, from the ancient world to mid-century America. An over-arching theme is the protean human potential for adaptation, innovation, and creativity by which couples and families struggle to thrive in the face of opposing forces, both internal and external. In this seminar, we study these themes not only as they have been treated in different parts of the world at different times, but also the means offered by each of the arts for their portrayal.  HU

* HUMS 247a / SOCY 352a, 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 262b / ENGL 269b / LITR 204b, Modernism and Domesticity  Katie Trumpener
Exploration of turn-of-the-century European attempts to craft modernist lives: how new ideas of women's roles, childhood, and the family shaped modernist literature and art—even as modernist designers tried to change people's experience of daily surroundings. Topics include a range of New Woman novels, modernist design, fashion, and stage sets, exemplary artists' houses (Carl and Karen Larson, Vanessa and Duncan Grant), reform fashions, portraits and family portraits, experimental fiction, memoirs (Andrej Bely, Walter Benjamin, Joyce, Woolf), and children's books as designs for living. Students will have the opportunity to research in modernist periodicals or contribute to the upcoming Beinecke Text/Textile exhibit.  WR, HU

* HUMS 269b / EALL 230b / EAST 242b, Poetry and Ethics Amidst Imperial Collapse  Lucas Bender
Du Fu has for the last millennium been considered China's greatest poet. Close study of nearly one-sixth of his complete works, contextualized by selections from the tradition that defined the art in his age. Exploration of the roles literature plays in interpreting
human lives and the ways different traditional forms shape different ethical orientation. Poetry as a vehicle for moral reflection. All readings are in English. WR, HU

**HUMS 270a / CHNS 200a / EALL 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 L5 proficiency in Mandarin or permission of the course instructor. HU TR 0 Course cr

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

* **HUMS 294a / EVST 294a / RSEE 355a / RUSS 355a, Ecology and Russian Culture**  Molly Brunson
Interdisciplinary study of Russian literature, film, and art from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, organized into four units—forest, farm, labor, and disaster. Topics include: perception and representation of nature; deforestation and human habitation; politics and culture of land-ownership; leisure, labor, and forced labor; modernity and industrialization; and nuclear technologies and disasters. Analysis of short stories, novels, and supplementary readings on ecocriticism and environmental humanities, as well as films, paintings, and visual materials. Several course meetings take place at the Yale Farm. Readings and discussions in English. HU

* **HUMS 303a / EDST 281a / PLSC 281a, What is the University?**  Mordechai Levy-Eichel
The University is one of the most influential—and underexamined—kinds of corporations in the modern world. It is responsible both for mass higher education and for elite training. It aims to produce and disseminate knowledge, and to prepare graduates for work in all different kinds of fields. It functions both as a symbol and repository of learning, if not ideally wisdom, and functions as one of the most important sites of networking, patronage, and socialization today. It is, in short, one of the most alluring and abused institutions in our culture today, often idolized as a savior or a scapegoat. And while the first universities were not founded in the service of research, today’s most prestigious schools claim to be centrally dedicated to it. But what is research? Where does our notion of research and the supposed ability to routinely produce it come from? This seminar is a high-level historical and structural examination of the rise of the research university. We cover both the origins and the modern practices of the university, from the late medieval world to the modern day, with an eye toward critically examining the development of the customs, practices, culture, and work around us, and with a strong comparative perspective. Topics include: tenure, endowments, the committee system, the growth of degrees, the aims of research, peer-review, the nature of disciplinary divisions, as well as a host of other issues. HU, SO TR
* HUMS 313b / HIST 212Jb, Philosophy of Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe
  Marci Shore
  This is a seminar in the field of European intellectual history, based on primary sources. It focuses on how philosophers, novelists, sociologists, and other thinkers developed and articulated a philosophy of dissent under communism. More specific topics include the relationships between temporality and subjectivity and between truth and lies, and the role that existentialism played in formulating philosophical critiques of repression. Readings consist of a mixture of philosophical and literary works from the Soviet Union, East Germany and the lands in-between. Potential authors include Merab Mamardashvili, Danilo Kiš, Józef Tischner, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroś, Ladislav Hejdanek, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Leszek Kołakowski, Gajo Petrović, Norman Manea, Lev Kopelev, Igor Pomerantsev, Tomas Venclova.

* 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 Zhongrunt.

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.

* HUMS 344a / FILM 318a / GMAN 355a, German Film from 1945 to the Present
  Fatima Naqvi
  We will look at a variety of German-language feature films from 1945 to the present in order to focus on issues of trauma, guilt, remembrance (and its counterpart: amnesia), gender, Heimat or “homeland,” national and transnational self-fashioning, terrorism, and ethics. How do the Second World War and its legacy inflect these films? What socio-political and economic factors influence the individual and collective identities that these films articulate? How do the predominant concerns shift with the passage of time and with changing media? How is the category of nation constructed and contested within the narratives themselves? Close attention will be paid to the aesthetic issues and the concept of authorship. Films by Staudte, Wolf, Kluge, Radax, Wenders, Fassbinder, Schroeter, Farocki, Haneke, Petzold, Schanelec, Seidl, Hausner, Geyrhalter, among others.
* HUMS 348a / FILM 432a / LITR 432a, World War II: Homefront Literature and Film Katie Trumpener
Examination of quotidian, civilian World War II experiences in many parts of Europe. Modes of literary and filmic reflection occasioned by the war; civilian perspectives on the relationship between history and everyday life, during and after the war; children’s experience of war; and ways homefront and occupation memories shaped postwar avant-gardes. HU

* HUMS 397a / PHIL 493a / RLST 428a, Neighbors and Others Nancy Levene
This course is an interdisciplinary investigation of concepts and stories of family, community, borders, ethics, love, and antagonism. Otherwise put, it concerns the struggles of life with others – the logic, art, and psychology of those struggles. The starting point is a complex of ideas at the center of religions, which are given to differentiating "us" from "them" while also identifying values such as the love of the neighbor that are to override all differences. But religion is only one avenue into the motif of the neighbor, a fraught term of both proximity and distance, a contested term and practice trailing in its wake lovers, enemies, kin, gods, and strangers. Who is my neighbor? What is this to ask and what does the question ask of us? Course material includes philosophy, literature, psychology, and film. WR, HU TR

* HUMS 403a / FREN 423a / LITR 410a, Interpretations: Simone Weil Greg Ellermann
Intensive study of the life and work of Simone Weil, one of the twentieth century’s most important thinkers. We read the iconic works that shaped Weil's posthumous reputation as “the patron saint of all outsiders,” including the mystical aphorisms Gravity and Grace and the utopian program for a new Europe The Need for Roots. But we also examine in detail the lesser-known writings Weil published in her lifetime—writings that powerfully intervene in some of the most pressing debates of her day. Reading Weil alongside contemporaries such as Trotsky, Heidegger, Arendt, Levinas, and Césaire, we see how her thought engages key philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic problems of the twentieth century: the relation between dictatorship and democracy; empire and the critique of colonialism; the ethics of attention and affliction; modern science, technology, and the human point of view; the responsibility of the writer in times of war; beauty and the possibility of transcendence; the practice of philosophy as a way of life. HU

HUMS 416a / GLBL 452a / HIST 149a, The Crisis of Liberalism Staff
Is there a “crisis of liberalism” occurring in the United States and around the world? What is liberalism? If it is in crisis, what are the features of the disorder and what are possible responses? Is it possible to believe in the further progress of liberal societies, or have they fallen into a decadent condition? SO Course cr

* HUMS 425a / HSAR 350a / LITR 399a / RLST 431a, Reality and the Realistic Noreen Khawaja and Joanna Fiduccia
A multidisciplinary exploration of the concept of reality in Euro-American culture. What do we mean when we say something is "real" or "realistic?" From what is it being differentiated—the imaginary, the surreal, the speculative? Can we approach a meaningful concept of the unreal? This course wagers that representational norms do not simply reflect existing notions of reality; they also shape our idea of reality itself. We study the dynamics of realism and its counterparts across a range of examples from modern art, literature, philosophy, and religion. Readings may include: Aimé Césaire,
Mircea Eliade, Karen Barad, Gustave Flaubert, Sigmund Freud, Renee Gladman, Saidiya Hartman, Arthur Schopenhauer. Our goal is to understand how practices of representation reveal something about our understanding of reality, shedding light on the ways we use this most basic, yet most elusive concept.  

* HUMS 443a / HIST 232Ja / JDST 270a / MMES 342a / RLST 201a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation  Ivan Marcus
How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  WR, HU RP

* 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