COMPARATIVE LITERATURE (LITR)

* LITR 029a / CLCV 051a / HUMS 061a / 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

* LITR 037a / HUMS 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

* LITR 130a / GMAN 200a / HUMS 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.

HU
* LITR 140b, How To Compare  Samuel Hodgkin
This course is an exploration of literary comparison from methodological as well as historical perspectives. We compare texts within genres, across genres and media, across periods, and between cultures and languages. We consider questions such as whether all comparisons must assume a common ground, and whether there is always an implicit politics to any comparison. Topics range from theories of translation and ekphrasis to exoticism and untranslatability. Readings include classics by critics such as Aristotle, Ibn Sina, and Kristeva, and writers such as Marie de France, Nezami, and Calvino. It also engages with the literature of our own moment: we will read a newly-translated novel by the Chilean writer Nona Fernàndez, and the Iranian poet Kayvan Tahmasebían will visit the class for a conversation. We will also discuss films (Parajanov and Barta) and a new Russian computer game. This course fulfills an introductory requirement for students considering one of the majors in the Comparative Literature department, but all are welcome, and the methodologies and questions discussed in the class are useful for any kind of humanistic inquiry.  HU

* LITR 168a or b / ENGL 129a or b / HUMS 127a 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, Calderón, 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

* LITR 169a or b / ENGL 130a or b, Epic in the European Literary Tradition  Staff
The epic tradition traced from its foundations in ancient Greece and Rome to the modern novel. The creation of cultural values and identities; exile and homecoming; the heroic in times of war and of peace; the role of the individual within society; memory and history; politics of gender, race, and religion. Works include Homer's *Odyssey*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Dante's *Inferno*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*. Focus on textual analysis and on developing the craft of persuasive argument through writing.  WR, HU

LITR 183a / HUMS 180a / ITAL 310a, 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  TR 0 Course cr

LITR 194a / ENGL 154a / FREN 216a / HUMS 134a, 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 0 Course cr
* LITR 204b / ENGL 269b / HUMS 262b, 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

* LITR 205a / RSEE 257a / RUSS 267a, Memory and Memoir in Russian Culture  Jinyi Chu

How do we remember and forget? How does memory transform into narrative? Why do we read and write memoirs and autobiography? What can they tell us about the past? How do we analyze the roles of the narrator, the author, and the protagonist? How should we understand the ideological tensions between official historiography and personal reminiscences, especially in 20th-century Russia? This course aims to answer these questions through close readings of a few cultural celebrities' memoirs and autobiographical writings that are also widely acknowledged as the best representatives of 20th-century Russian prose. Along the way, we read literary texts in dialogue with theories of memory, historiography, and narratology. Students acquire the theoretical apparatus that enables them to analyze the complex ideas, e.g. cultural memory and trauma, historicity and narrativity, and fiction and non-fiction. Students finish the course with an in-depth knowledge of the major themes of 20th-century Russian history, e.g. empire, revolution, war, Stalinism, and exilic experience, as well as increased skills in the analysis of literary texts. Students with knowledge of Russian are encouraged to read in the original language. All readings are available in English.  WR, HU

* LITR 210a / RSEE 313a / RUSS 313a / SLAV 313a / THST 314a, Art and Resistance in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine  Staff

This interdisciplinary seminar is devoted to the study of protest art as part of the struggle of society against authoritarianism and totalitarianism. It focuses on the example of the Soviet and post-Soviet transformation of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. The period under discussion begins after the death of Stalin in 1953 and ends with the art of protest against the modern post-Soviet dictatorships of Alexander Lukashenka in Belarus and Vladimir Putin in Russia, the protest art of the Ukrainian Maidan and the anti-war movement of artists against the Russian-Ukrainian war. The course begins by looking at the influence of the “Khrushchev Thaw” on literature and cinema, which opened the way for protest art to a wide Soviet audience. We explore different approaches to protest art in conditions of political unfreedom: "nonconformism," "dissidence," "mimicry," "rebellion." The course investigates the existential conflict of artistic freedom and the political machine of authoritarianism. These themes are explored at different levels through specific examples from the works and biographies of artists. Students immerse themselves in works of different genres: films, songs, performances, plays and literary works.  HU
* LITR 239a / CLCV 216a / MGRK 216a / WGSS 209a, Dionysus in Modernity
  George Syrimis
  Modernity’s fascination with the myth of Dionysus. Questions of agency, identity and community, and psychological integrity and the modern constitution of the self. Manifestations of Dionysus in literature, anthropology, and music; the Apollonian-Dionysiac dichotomy; twentieth-century variations of these themes in psychoanalysis, surrealism, and magical realism.  HU TR

LITR 258b / LAST 267b / SPAN 267b, Studies in Latin American Literature II
  Lisa Voigt
  An introduction to Latin American literature from the nineteenth century to the present. Works by Borges, García Márquez, Paz, Neruda, Cortázar, and others.  L5, HU TR

* LITR 290a / PORT 353a, Machado de Assis: Major Novels
  Kenneth David Jackson
  A study of the last five novels of Machado de Assis, featuring the author’s world and stage of Rio de Janeiro, along with his irony and skepticism, satire, wit, narrative concision, social critiques, and encyclopedic assimilation of world literature.  WR, HU

* LITR 294a / LAST 394a / PORT 394a, World Cities and Narratives
  Kenneth David Jackson
  Study of world cities and selected narratives that describe, belong to, or represent them. Topics range from the rise of the urban novel in European capitals to the postcolonial fictional worlds of major Portuguese, Brazilian, and Lusophone cities. Conducted in English.  WR, HU TR

* LITR 303a / EALL 288a / RUSS 316a, Socialist ’80s: Aesthetics of Reform in China and the Soviet Union
  Jinyi Chu
  This course offers an interdisciplinary introduction to the study of the complex cultural and political paradigms of late socialism from a transnational perspective by focusing on the literature, cinema, and popular culture of the Soviet Union and China in 1980s. How were intellectual and everyday life in the Soviet Union and China distinct from and similar to that of the West of the same era? How do we parse “the cultural logic of late socialism?” What can today’s America learn from it? Examining two major socialist cultures together in a global context, this course queries the ethnographic, ideological, and socio-economic constituents of late socialism. Students analyze cultural materials in the context of Soviet and Chinese history. Along the way, we explore themes of identity, nationalism, globalization, capitalism, and the Cold War. Students with knowledge of Russian and Chinese are encouraged to read in original languages. All readings are available in English.  WR, HU TR

* LITR 358b / FILM 425b / GMAN 275b, East German Literature and Film
  Katie Trumpener
  The German Democratic Republic (1949-1989) was a political and aesthetic experiment that failed, buffeted by external pressures, and eroded by internal contradictions. For forty years, in fact, its most ambitious literary texts and films (some suppressed, others widely popular) explored such contradictions, often in a vigilant, Brechtian spirit of irony and dialectics. This course examines key texts both as aesthetic experiments and as critiques of the country’s emerging cultural institutions and state censorship, recurrent political debates and pressing social issues. Texts by Brecht, Uwe Johnson, Heiner Müller, Christa Wolf, Johannes Bobrowski, Franz Fühmann, Wolf Biermann,
Thomas Brasch, Christoph Hein; films by Slatan Dudow, Kurt Maetzig, Konrad Wolf, Heiner Carow, Frank Beyer, Jürgen Böttcher, Volker Koepp. Knowledge of German desirable but not crucial; all texts available in English. WR, HU

* LITR 359b / FILM 457b / ITAL 303b, Italian Film from Postwar to Postmodern
Millicent Marcus
A study of important Italian films from World War II to the present. Consideration of works that typify major directors and trends. Topics include neorealism, self-reflexivity and metacinema, fascism and war, and postmodernism. Films by Fellini, Antonioni, Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti, Pasolini, Bertolucci, Wertmuller, Tornatore, and Moretti. Films in Italian with English subtitles. WR, HU

* LITR 360a / FILM 363a / LAST 360a, Radical Cinemas of Latin America
Moira Fradinger
Introduction to Latin American cinema, with an emphasis on post–World War II films produced in Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Examination of each film in its historical and aesthetic aspects, and in light of questions concerning national cinema and "third cinema." Examples from both pre-1945 and contemporary films. Conducted in English; knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese helpful but not required. HU o Course cr

LITR 361a / FILM 305a, Animation: Disney and Beyond
Staff
Survey of the history of animation, considering both its aesthetics and its social potentials. The focus is on Disney and its many alternatives, with examples from around the world, from various traditions, and from different periods. HU o Course cr

* LITR 370a / FILM 317a / MMES 317a, Comparative New Wave Studies
Fatima Naqvi
From the late 1950s, demands for “new cinemas” were being raised in different parts of the world. What was soon to come forth changed the practice and understanding of film until our time. While open to diverse intellectual approaches, this course investigates the emergence of various “new wave cinemas” by placing them not only in their national contexts but also within a global frame. Our comparative critical approach focuses on the cinematic, with a constant side-eye gaze towards the visual and literary, modernism of Brazil (Cinema Novo), France (Nouvelle Vague with an eye for Nouveau Roman), Iran (Moj-e Now, often juxtaposed and analyzed with the “New Poetry”) , and Yugoslavia (The Black Wave). Authoritative historiographies of these new wave cinemas have repeatedly underappreciated documentary films, often placing them into the evolutionary narrative of a “national cinema” or that of an auteur. This course, in reverse, foregrounds the transnational and the nonfiction. The documentaries produced in the formative years, the moment of emergence, of these new waves are established as a kind of “pre-history” that impacted how these cinematic modernisms developed in time. As the class moves forward, two major sub-themes will emerge: the body and the city. We consider these questions: Do films brought under the designation new wave have a different relationship to the materiality of the profilmic world? In what ways the bodies and urban environments they film affect them? Can one speak positively of a global new wave style? And, if the answer to that question is yes, what were the conditions of its border crossings? WR, HU
* LITR 399a / HSAR 350a / HUMS 425a / 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.  

* LITR 410a / FREN 423a / HUMS 403a, 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.  

* LITR 423a / MMES 237a, Politics and Literature in Modern Iran and Afghanistan
  Bezhan Pazhohan
  This course traces the emergence of modern Persian literature in Iran and Afghanistan, introducing the contemporary poets and writers of fiction who created this new literary tradition in spite of political, social, state, and religious constraints. Our readings include Iranian novelists working under censorship, Afghan memoirists describing their experience in a warzone, and even contemporary writers living in exile in the US or Europe. Major writers include Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, Sadegh Hedayat, Simin Behbahani, Forough Farrokhzad, Homeira Qaderi (who will visit the class), and Khaled Hosseini.  

* LITR 432a / FILM 432a / HUMS 348a, 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.
This course dedicates an entire semester to a close reading of the two parts of Miguel de Cervantes’s novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. Announcing itself as a “true history,” yet, whose fictional devices clearly shine through, *Don Quixote* occupies the privileged space of first modern novel where, within its literary fabric(ations), a theory of the novel is devised. Our readings of *Don Quixote* examine how the classic novel inserts, parodies, and transforms all previous literary and non-literary discourses to ingeniously invent a new narrative form. To contextualize Cervantes and his literary-historic tradition, this seminar also explores questions of erotic and literary desire, the role of madness and mental health, empire and the circulation of material culture and material wealth, the Edenic narrative and ecologies of the natural world, censorship and the Inquisition, the status of representation and performance, translation, as well as the constructions of class, gender, race, and nation. We also study the legacy of *Don Quixote* and its quixotic narratives through contemporary art, essays, films, novels, science fiction, and television. This course is taught in Spanish. HU

Beyond adaptations of complex fiction (Henry James, James Joyce) literature may underlie “original” film masterpieces (Rules of the Game, Voyage to Italy). What about the reverse? Famous novelists moonlighted in the film world (Scott Fitzgerald, Graham Greene). Others developed styles in contact with cinema (Marguerite Duras, Eileen Chang, Kazuo Ishiguro). Today are these art forms evolving in parallel and in parity under new cultural conditions? HU

Representations of war in literature and film; reasons for changes over time in portrayals of war. Texts by Stendahl, Tolstoy, Juenger, Remarque, Malraux, and Vonnegut; films by Eisenstein, Tarkovsky, Joris Ivens, Coppola, Spielberg, and Altman. HU

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

An independent writing and research project. The minimum length for an essay is twenty-five pages. Students are urged to arrange a topic and adviser early in the term before the term in which the essay is to be written. Dates and deadlines may be found on the department website.
* LITR 492a, The Yearlong Senior Essay  Samuel Hodgkin
An extended research project. Students must petition the curriculum committee for
permission to enroll by the last day of classes in the term preceding enrollment in
LITR 492. December graduates should consult the director of undergraduate studies
for required deadlines. The minimum length for a yearlong senior essay is forty pages.
Dates and deadline may be found on the department website.