HUMANITIES

Director of undergraduate studies: Norma Thompson (norma.thompson@yale.edu), Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall St., 432-1313; chair: Bryan Garsten (bryan.garsten@yale.edu), 53 Wall St., 432-0670; humanities.yale.edu

The undergraduate program in Humanities provides students the opportunity to integrate courses from across the humanistic disciplines into intellectually coherent and personally meaningful courses of study. Works of literature, music, history, philosophy, and the visual arts are brought into conversation with one another and with the history of ideas.

The major in Humanities asks students to begin with broad surveys of foundational works in at least two different cultural traditions, including at least one course on classical Western European texts. After taking these core seminars, students in the major share a broad grounding in several cultural traditions, the experience of having grappled with the question of what “modernity” is, and the experience of having spent a term interpreting a single work (or small corpus of works) in great depth. Students then craft an area of concentration according to their interests and with the help of appropriate faculty members. The major offers breadth and interdisciplinary scope even as it encourages depth and intellectual coherence.

COURSES FOR NONMAJORS

Students in all classes can find options in the varied course offerings, from special seminars for first-year students to the Franke and Shulman Seminars for seniors. Many courses are open to nonmajors.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major for the Class of 2021 and subsequent classes

In addition to the fourteen term courses as listed here, majors are required to keep an intellectual journal.

Fourteen term courses are required for the major, including three “foundational works” surveys, two core seminars, one course in each of four areas of study in the humanities (which may include the Franke and Shulman Seminars), four additional electives selected to complement the student’s area of concentration and approved by the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), and a one- or two-term senior essay. Majors are also required to keep an intellectual journal and are strongly encouraged to enroll in at least one term course in literature in a foreign language.

Foundations

Three broad surveys of foundational works in any cultural tradition are required, such as HIST 280, EALL 200, or RLST 189. One or two foundations courses must be in the classical tradition of Western Europe, such as Directed Studies, or ENGL 129 or CLCV 256.

Core seminars

The major requires two core seminars, one in "Modernities" and one in "Interpretations." Each core seminar is taught by a pair of faculty members from complementary disciplines. The two broad themes of the seminars remain consistent from year to year, but the material studied and the faculty members teaching change, allowing each class of students to explore the themes in different ways.

Areas of study in the humanities

One course is required in each of four areas: literature; visual, musical, or dramatic arts; science in the humanities; and intellectual history and historical analysis. Courses may be drawn from any department or program in Yale College, with the approval of the DUS.

Intellectual journal

In an effort to spark integrative thinking across a student’s various courses and extra-curricular commitments, students are encouraged to log entries outlining particularly striking moments in their intellectual lives, whether in courses or outside of them, and are encouraged to keep track of questions they would like to pursue in their studies, insights they come across, and projects they envision for themselves in the future, including possible senior essay topics. Students must submit a minimum of one journal entry each semester to the DUS. At the completion of their studies, students will receive a hard copy of their journal.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

A one- or two-term senior essay is required (HUMS 491).

ADVISING

Students are expected to declare their intent to major in Humanities in a meeting with the DUS before their junior year.

UNIQUE TO THE MAJOR

The Franke Seminar and the Shulman Seminar

Sponsored by the Whitney Humanities Center and designed to speak across disciplinary lines to broad public and intellectual issues, the Franke Seminar and the Shulman Seminar each include a series of coordinated public lectures. The seminars are for enrolled students; the lecture series are open to the Yale and local communities. Humanities majors may enroll in a Franke or a Shulman Seminar with permission of the DUS and the instructor.

Summer program in Rome

Humanities majors who take the spring-term course HUMS 444, The City of Rome (or its equivalent, with instructor approval), and develop individual research topics to be pursued in Rome may apply for enrollment in a two-credit summer course offered by Yale Summer Session. Museums, archaeological sites, churches, piazzas, libraries, and the city itself are part of the
classroom for the summer course. Further information is available on the Humanities program website and the Yale Summer Session website.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Intellectual journal A minimum of one journal entry every term

Number of courses 14 term courses (incl senior essay)

Distribution of courses 3 foundations courses; 2 core sems, as specified; 1 course in each of 4 disciplinary areas; 4 electives in concentration

Senior requirement Senior essay (HUMS 491)

FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF HUMANITIES

Professors Jeffrey Alexander (Sociology), R. Howard Bloch (French), Harold Bloom (Humanities), Edyta Bojanowska (Slavic Languages & Literatures), Leslie Brisman (English), David Bromwich (English), Rüdiger Campe (German), Francesco Casetti (Humanities), Deborah Coen (History of Science and Medicine, History), Stephen Davis (Religious Studies, History), Carolyn Dean (History and French), Carlos Eire (History, Religious Studies), Paul Freedman (History), Kirk Freudenburg (Classics), Bryan Garsten (Political Science), Marie-Hélène Girard (French), Phyllis Granoff (Religious Studies), Emily Greenwood (Classics), David Grewal (School of Law, Political Science), Frank Griffel (Religious Studies), Christine Hayes (Religious Studies, Judaic Studies), Alice Kaplan (French), Anthony Kronman (School of Law), Tina Lu (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Ivan Marcus (History, Religious Studies), Stefanie Markovits (English), Giuseppe Mazzotta (Italian), Samuel Moyn (History, School of Law), Paul North (German), John Durham Peters (English, Film & Media Studies), Brigitte Peucker (German), Pierre Saint-Amand (French), Maurice Samuels (French), Steven Smith (Political Science, Philosophy), Nicola Suthor (History of Art), Gary Tomlinson (Music, Humanities), Shawkat Toorawa (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), Katie Trumpener (Comparative Literature), Jing Tsu (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Miroslav Volf (Divinity School), Anders Winroth (History, Ruth Yeazell (English)

Associate Professors Paola Bertucci (History, History of Science, Medicine, and Public Health), Toni Dorfman (Associate) (Theater Studies), Moira Fradiger (Comparative Literature), Millette Gailman (History of Art, Classics), Martin Hägglund (Comparative Literature, Humanities), Mick Hunter (East Asian Languages and Literatures), Jacqueline Jung (History of Art), Brian Kane (Music), Noreen Khawaja (Religious Studies), Pauline LeVen (Classics), Joanna Radin (History of Medicine, History), Marci Shore (History), Kirk Wetters (German)

Assistant Professors Marisa Bass (History of Art), Lucas Bender (East Asian Languages and Literatures, Humanities), Marijeta Bozovic (Slavic Languages & Literatures), Molly Brunson (Slavic Languages & Literatures), Thomas C. Connolly (French), Emily Erikson (Sociology), Marta Figlerowicz (Comparative Literature, English), Seth Jacobowitz (East Asian Languages and Literatures), Jessica Lamont (Classics), Isaac Nakhimovsky (History), Joseph North (English), Giulia Oskian (Political Science), Christiana Purdy Moudarres (Italian), Ayesha Ramachandran (Comparative Literature), Katrin Truestedt (German)

Senior Lecturers Peter Cole (Judaic Studies), Charles Hill (Humanities), William Klein (Humanities), Pauline Lin (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Stuart Semmel (History, Humanities), Kathryn Slanski (Humanities, Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Norma Thompson (Humanities)

Lecturers Brianne Bilsky (Humanities), Matthew Crosmanun (Divinity School), Jonathan Fine (Humanities), Andrew Forsyth (Religious Studies), Joseph Gordon (English), Alfred Guy (English), Hugo Havranek (Philosophy), Virginia Jewiss (Humanities), Katja Lindskog (English), Camille Lizarralba (Humanities), Judith Malafont (Music), Sara Misen (Religious Studies), Mireille Pardon (History), Terence Renaud (Humanities), Karin Roffman (Humanities, English), Lea Schroeder (Philosophy), Deborah Strehle (History of Science & Medicine), George Syrimis (Hellenic Studies), Britt Tevis (Humanities), Adam Van Doren (School of Art)

Seminars for First Years

Directed Studies is an interdisciplinary introduction to influential texts that have shaped Western civilization.

* HUMS 0652, Education and the Life Worth Living Matthew Crosman

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

* HUMS 071A, Intellectual Circles Charles Hill

Study of the creative interactions produced by informal associations of innovative minds in literature, philosophy, politics, science, psychology, the arts, war, and law. Courtiers, advisors, disciples, and disputers around Confucius, Socrates, Lincoln, Freud, Wittgenstein, and Niebuhr are among the circles considered. Groups include American Founders, quantum physicists, computer scientists, Gertrude Stein’s “Lost Generation” of Americans in Paris, “The Georgetown Set” of Cold War friends and rivals, and the Supreme Court. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU
* HUMS 072b / ENGL 023b, Reading Recent North American Short Fiction  Joseph Gordon
The short story is generally considered to be North American in origin. As one of its goals, the course examines the ways in which the genre has developed in recent decades into a vehicle for storytelling from marginalized or subaltern voices such as those of people of color, women, LGBT people, immigrants and refugees, war veterans, students, and children. The course also explores how collections of stories gathered by a single author may resemble but yet be distinguishable from novels, and examines some very recent short stories that are influenced by nontraditional forms of writing, such as graphic fiction, self-help manuals, and social media. Authors are likely to include: Grace Paley, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Raymond Carver, Lucia Berlin, Sherman Alexie, Tao Lin, Lydia David, Jhumpa Lahiri, Edward P. Jones, Elizabeth Strout, Junot Diaz, Phil Klay, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Alison Bechdel, Nathan Englander, Kristen Rupenian, Jennifer Egan, and Teju Cole. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU

* HUMS 075a, Mastering the Art of Watercolor  Adam Van Doren
An introductory course on the art of watercolor as a humanistic discipline within the liberal arts tradition. Readings, discussions, and studio work emphasize critical, creative thinking through a tactile, “learning by doing” study of the watercolor medium. Students analyze and imitate the classic techniques of J. M.W. Turner, John Singer Sargent, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Edward Hopper, among others. Studio components include painting en plein air to understand color, form, perspective, composition, and shade and shadow. Basic drawing skills recommended. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

* HUMS 083b / ENGL 030b, Fantasy in Literature and Film  Alfred Guy
Study of how fantasy ideas about race and gender, good and evil, and religion and culture reflect and influence changing ideas about what it means to be human. Authors include Neil Gaiman, Ursula K. LeGuin, Octavia Butler, & Nalo Hopkinson. Major fantasy films include Prisoner of Azkaban and Get Out. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU

* HUMS 094a, The Two Cultures: Science and the Humanities  Brianne Bilsky
The relationship between the sciences and the humanities has never been a comfortable one. Nearly sixty years ago, C. P. Snow, a British physical chemist and novelist, commented on this uneasiness in his now famous work, The Two Cultures. Snow argued that the rift between scientists and literary scholars prevented modern societies from solving many of their problems. But what happens when science and the humanities actually do come together? What might be gained by putting these seemingly disparate ways of understanding the world in conversation with each other? This first-year seminar considers such questions by looking at several intersections between science and the humanities throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These intersections include: astrophysics and religion; modern science and modernist literature; quantum mechanics and postmodernism; and medicine and ethics. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU

Core Seminars

Humanities Electives

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 / LITR 130a, How to Read  Ayesha Ramachandran and Samuel Hodgkin
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 134a / ENGL 154a / FREN 216a / LITR 194a, The Multicultural Middle Ages  Ardis Buttefield
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. HU

HUMS 143b / CLCV 205b / HIST 205b, Introduction to Ancient Greek History  Jessica Lamont
An introductory course in Greek history tracing the development of Greek civilization as manifested in political, intellectual, and creative achievements from the Bronze Age to the end of the classical period. Students read original sources in translation as well as the works of modern scholars. 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 150a, Shakespeare and the Canon: Histories, Comedies, and Poems  Harold Bloom
A reading of Shakespeare’s histories, comedies, and poems, with an emphasis on their originality in regard to tradition and their influence on Western representation since the seventeenth century. Secondary readings included.  HU

* HUMS 151b, Shakespeare and the Canon: Tragedies and Romances  Harold Bloom
A reading of Shakespeare’s tragedies and romances, with an emphasis on their originality in regard to tradition: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest.  HU

* HUMS 152a, Poetic Influence from Shakespeare to Keats  Harold Bloom
The complexities of poetic influence in the traditions of the English language, from Shakespeare to Keats.  HU

* HUMS 153b, Poetic Influence from Shakespeare to Hart Crane  Harold Bloom
The complexities of poetic influence in the traditions of the English language. Works by Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Yeats, followed by an American sequence of Whitman, Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and Hart Crane.  HU

* HUMS 162b / FREN 388b, Feminine Voices in French Literature  R. Howard Bloch
An exploration of women’s voices in French literature from the Middle Ages to the mid-twentieth century. The specificity of the feminine voice, the plurality of feminine voices, love and sexuality, and social and professional identity. Authors include Marie de France, Marguerite de Navarre, George Sand, Maryse Condé, and Marguerite Duras. Readings and discussion in English.  WR, HU

HUMS 176a / HSAR 176a, Introduction to the History of Art: The Politics of Representation  Marisa Bass
This global introductory course surveys how works of art and architecture have responded to political ideals, shaped political life, and galvanized political debate from antiquity to the present. We consider the relation between visual representation and political representation, addressing how artists and architects have responded to the demands of democracy, empire, war, and revolution, and how individuals and communities have reacted with and against the works that they produced. Topics span from propaganda to public monuments, icons to iconoclasm, civic buildings to border walls, and from the politics of display to political censorship. Ranging from painting, sculpture, prints, and photography to architecture, landscape design, and military fortification, this course aims to de-center ‘western’ notions of artistic achievement in its multi-media and transnational scope. Lectures and assignments emphasize close looking and close reading, skills which are essential to making us better viewers and citizens. Open to all, including those with no prior background in art history. Sections will include visits to collections and sites across Yale campus.  HU

HUMS 180a / ITAL 310a / LITR 183a, Dante in Translation  Giuseppe Mazzotta
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 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 201b / FREN 240b / LITR 214b, The Modern French Novel  Maurice Samuels and Alice Kaplan
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 204a / ENGL 210a, The Drama of Justice and Mercy  Lawrence Manley and Trina Hyun
An examination of justice, mercy, and the law in drama, film, and writings from disciplines at the intersection of literature, law, ethics, and religion. Reconsidering the usual binaries of convict and victim, self and other, judgment and forgiveness from antiquity to the present, the seminar gives voice to enduring questions about the brokenness of freedom, human rights, and the status of religious belief. Plays by Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Soyinka, and Peter Brook; films by Sidney Lumet, Gavin Hood, and Martin Scorsese; selected readings in philosophy and religion from Plato, Aristotle, the Bible, Montaigne, Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum, and Howard Lesnick; and recent publications on the mass incarceration crisis in the U.S. (Bryan Stevenson’s Just Mercy; John Pfaff’s Locked In: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration; Danielle Allen’s Cuz: The Life and Times of Michael A.). The seminar models a gracious and inclusive learning community, seeking to move past the paralysis that often occurs in well-meaning conversations on politics and controversial social issues. To this end, we welcome students of all backgrounds and majors: theater/performance majors, English majors, non-majors, those with long-standing opinions and insights, and/or those with fresh eyes and genuine interest.  WR, HU, TR

* HUMS 205a, Boundaries of the Body in Law and Literature  Camille Lizarríbar
The representation of the human body in law and literature. Bodies as physical structures that inhabit multiple realms, including material, cultural, historical, and symbolic. Ways in which humans think about and give meaning to their bodies in relationship to themselves and to others. Additional sources include film, television, and journalism.  WR, HU
HUMS 206a / ENGL 191a / LITR 318a / NELC 201a, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now  Shawkat Toorawa and Ayesha Ramachandran

Exploration of Arabian Nights, a classic of world literature. Topics include antecedents, themes and later prose, and graphic and film adaptations.  HU TR

* HUMS 212b / LITR 400b / NELC 241b, Mystical Poetry of Judaism and Islam  Peter Cole and Shawkat Toorawa

Poetry and song run through the heart of both Judaism and Islam, and so-called mystical verse plays a vital role within both traditions. This class looks at key works from both of these bodies of verse, on their own terms and in relation to one another. It also examines the cultural and historical matrices that gave rise to the poetry. Subjects range from alphabets of creation, the poetry of ascent, wine poetry, and the divine nature of the beloved to negative theology, interacting planes of macrocosm and microcosm, antinomian breakthrough, and, above all, poetry’s power to bring about critical transformations of consciousness. Readings are drawn from the Bible, Hebrew visionary poetry of Late Antiquity (Poems of the Palaces, Book of Creation), pre- and early-Islamic material, the Qur’an, the Arabized Hebrew of two major Andalusian poets, Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah HaLevi, the syncretic Sufism of Ibn al-'Arabi and of the great Persian poets Rumi and Hafez, the extensive Kabbalistic tradition that developed in 13th-century Spain and 16th-century Palestine, the hybrid liturgy of the Muslim-Jewish Donneh of Salonika (and their Turkish precursors), Ghalib’s Urdu ghazals, Kabir’s Bhakti-influenced vernacular Hindi poetry, and secular transformations of this mystical material into the modern era. All work is read in English translation. Material in the original languages is available to interested students.  HU TR

* HUMS 218a / FILM 235a, Storytelling and Contemporary TV  Virginia Jewiss

If Shakespeare were alive today, he would be writing for TV. So would Jane Austen. With the advent of cable, DVDs, the internet, and live streaming, TV—once considered a “vast wasteland”—has become the most dynamic and creative medium for storytelling, attracting talented writers, directors, and actors. This course explores the innovative narrative strategies that have transformed that wasteland into fertile terrain and ushered in a new Golden Age of TV. Careful visual and textual analysis of episodes is complemented by critical readings and comparisons to literature and cinema. We also consider technical and business pressures on the creative process behind today’s “complex TV.” The first part of the term focuses on the AMC series Breaking Bad. The second part considers episodes from a range of shows in order to highlight the significance of title sequences, pilots, dialogue, subjective narration, jumbled chronology, and problematic endings. The third part examines the HBO series The Young Pope, which brings narrative and visual effects from cinema to the small screen.  HU

* HUMS 220b / HIST 289Jb / HSAR 399b / HSHM 407b, Collecting Nature and Art in the Preindustrial World  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 237a / HIST 420Ja / PLSC 334a, Liberalism  Mordechai Levy-Eichel

What is liberalism? And why do arguments about it stand at the epicenter of our political life? Is it a political idea (and what are ideas in politics, anyways?), or is it a philosophy that tries to carve out a space apart from high politics—and is that even possible? Is it about rights, or about equality? Is it about freedom and liberty, or laws and regulations? (And why are these dichotomies anyways?) Is it ancient? Is it modern? Can we even define what liberalism means, or does the attempt to do so in some way even miss the point? This class is a historical, philosophical, and political examination of one of the most important and contested ideas in the modern world. We read both critics and advocates of liberalism. We also examine it historically, sociologically, and comparatively, in order to gain a better sense of what it means in practice, and how that differs from the theories of both some of it’s most strong supporters and defenders, and critics. Special attention is paid to the development of the ethos and examples of liberalism. This course is also be a meditation on how to study politics and political theory. What does liberalism mean, and how should we examine it? Where did it come from, and how has it changed over time?  SO TR

* 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 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 Christian poems from 1850 to the present. Some attention to poems from other faith traditions, as well as to secular and antireligious poetry.  HU

HUMS 255b / RSEE 312b / RUSS 312b, Tolstoy’s War and Peace  Edyta Bojanowska

A study of Leo Tolstoy’s masterpiece War and Peace (1865-1869) about Napoleon’s 1812 invasion of Russia, in philosophical, historical, and political contexts. All readings and class discussions in English.  WR, HU TR
Do visual representations of social and political principles have a peculiar power to produce, reproduce, and disturb social and political relations? To what extent might represented principles, with their contradictions and ambiguities, themselves somehow be pictorial, metaphorical, or figurative? This course is an examination of art and metaphorical thinking in the socio-political realm from Plato through Renaissance republicanism to the modern state.

An introduction to the literature, culture, and 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.

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.

The French Revolution of 1789 and its legacies, as viewed through the late-eighteenth-century debates about democracy, equality, representative government, and historical change that shaped an enduring agenda for historical and political thought in Europe and around the world.

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.

Brazilian and Japanese novels from the late nineteenth century to the present. Representative texts from major authors are read in pairs to explore their commonalities and divergences. Topics include nineteenth-century realism and naturalism, the rise of mass culture and the avant-garde, and existentialism and postmodernism. No knowledge of Portuguese or Japanese required.

Exploration of the rich intellectual landscape of the Chinese middle ages, introducing students to seminal works of Chinese civilization and to the history of their debate and interpretation in the first millennium. No previous knowledge of China is assumed. Instead, the course serves as a focused introduction to Chinese philosophy, religion, and literature.

Is the demise of the trial at hand? The trial as cultural achievement, considered as the epitome of humanistic inquiry, where all is brought to bear on a crucial matter in an uncertain context. Truth may be hammered out or remain elusive, but the expectation in the court case has been that the adversarial mode works best for sorting out evidentiary conundrums. Inquiries into issues of meaning of the trial, its impartiality, and challenges to its endurability. The role of character, doubt, and diagnosis explored in Sophocles, Plato, Cicero, Burke, Jane Austen, Tocqueville, and Kafka, as well as in twentieth-century trials, films, documentaries, and twenty-first-century medical narratives.

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Comparative survey of ancient discourses about wisdom from China, India, the Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Topics include teaching, scheming, and dying.

International security as humanity’s primary problem beyond policy methodologies. America’s unique place for and against world order seen in classical literature and intellectual forays into Japan, Africa, Palestine, Persia, etc. Kissinger Papers at Yale provide case studies.

The political, economic, and philosophical figure of the “death sentence,” although it has archaic roots, continues to haunt the 21st century. “Capital punishment,” often understood as the paradigmatic, final, and ultimate form of sovereign power, forms only the starting point of our inquiry. If it is the case that, as John Locke writes quoting Cicero, salus populi suprema lex esto (the safety of the people should be the supreme law), and if, furthermore, this maxim extends in the name of national security up to and including the point where the lives of certain people and populations are thrown into question, then all instances where the state kills, sanctions killing, or benefits directly or indirectly from the killing of its own citizens must be in question in the course. It may seem strange—modern politics, economics, and philosophy all begin from death sentences. The French revolution depended on bloody executions that were “necessary” for founding a new polity. The Atlantic slave trade condemned millions of Africans to death, under economic reasoning, for the benefit of world capitalism. Athens killed the philosopher Socrates because he was dangerous to the polis, and philosophy has enshrined this death sentence as its mythical origin and its most modern moment. We investigate the stories and logics these events have in common. Why does the state kill its own? Why are death sentences necessary for the current complex of state-nation-capital? Why did
“barbaric” practices not end with enlightenment, the critique of religion, scientific rationalism, modernization, capitalism? Answers to these questions come from texts in political theory, philosophy, history, and the social sciences.  

* HUMS 327a / ENGL 263a, The Victorian Political Novel  Stefan Markovits
The engagement of the Victorian novel with the world of politics. Emphasis on how systems interact with individual agents to make stories and how methods such as realism, romance, and the courtship plot portray the mechanics of government. Units on revolution and riot (Dickens and Gaskell), reform (Eliot and Trollope), and anarchy (James and Conrad).  WR, HU  

* HUMS 330a / GMAN 227a / LITR 330a / PHIL 402a, Heidegger’s Being and Time  Martin Hagglund
Systematic, chapter by chapter study of Heidegger’s Being and Time, arguably the most important work of philosophy in the twentieth-century. All major themes addressed in detail, with particular emphasis on care, time, death, and the meaning of being.  HU  

* HUMS 336b / E&EB 336b / HSHM 453b, Culture and Human Evolution  Gary Tomlinson
Examination of the origins of human modernity in the light of evolutionary and archaeological evidence. Understanding, through a merger of evolutionary reasoning with humanistic theory, the impact of human culture on natural selection across the last 250,000 years.  HU, SC  

HUMS 339a / HIST 271a / RSEE 271a, European Intellectual History since Nietzsche  Marci Shore
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 342b / ER&M 416b / GMAN 411b / JDST 327b / LITR 406b, World Literature  Hannan Hever
The concept of world literature, from its origins in eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism represented by Herder and Goethe up to contemporary critical debates (Apter, Casanova, Cheah, Damrosch, Dharwadker, I. Hesse, Moretti, Mufti, Pollock, Said, Spivak). World literature in relation to national literature, German-language, and Jewish literature; translation, untranslatability, the effect of markets, diaspora, politics. Literary critical readings supplemented by exemplary literary texts in multiple genres. Student contributions based on individual linguistic backgrounds.  HU  

* HUMS 351a / PLSC 314a, The American Imagination: From the Puritans to the Civil War  Steven Smith and Anthony Kronman
Interdisciplinary examination of the uniqueness of the American experience from the time of the Puritans to the Civil War. Readings draw on major works of political theory, theology, and literature.  HU  

* HUMS 352b / ENGL 272b / HIST 105Jb, American Imagination: From the Gilded Age to the Cold War  David Bromwich and Bryan Garsten
Survey of major ideas, writings, and cultural movements that have shaped American life and thought from 1880 to 1990. Assignments encompass works of fiction, philosophy, social and political thought, and film.  HU  

* HUMS 411b, Life Worth Living  Matthew Croasmun and Ryan McAnnally-Linz
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. Admission by application.  HU  

* HUMS 415a / FREN 400a / HSAR 458a, The Worlds of Chartres Cathedral  Jacqueline Jung and R. Howard Bloch
An exploration of Chartres Cathedral as a meeting point of various artistic, technological, ritual, literary, intellectual, and social trends in the High Middle Ages. We study what went into building this “chief sanctuary of the Virgin in Western Europe,” how the cathedral fit into and changed the world around it, Gothic design and construction, and the literature connected to Chartres as well as to the urban centers of northern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Topics include: the pre-history of the present cathedral; royal, noble, and local patronage; sculptural programs of the west façade and northern and southern portals; stained glass programs of the west wall, nave, transept (great rose windows), and choir; relics; liturgical and affective experiences of Chartres; the cathedral as a physical, sacred and social space; the cult of the Virgin; new learning and the cathedral school; literary works attached to the Charlemagne window (The Song of Roland, The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne, The Pseudo-Turpin), to the cathedral more generally (The Miracles of Our Lady of Chartres), to the towns of medieval France (Fabliaux); renovation and restoration of post-medieval Chartres.  HU  

* HUMS 427b / ENGL 456b / LITR 348b, The Practice of Literary Translation  Peter Cole
Intensive readings in the history and theory of translation paired with practice in translating. Case studies from ancient languages (the Bible, Greek and Latin classics), medieval languages (classical Arabic literature), and modern languages (poetic texts).  HU  

* HUMS 443a / HIST 232Ja / JDST 270a / MMES 342a / RLST 201a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation  Ivan Marcus
How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  WR, HU, RP
* HUMS 444a, 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. Exploration of the city’s rich interweaving of history, theology, literature, philosophy, and the arts in significant moments of Roman and world history.  HU

* HUMS 454a / ENGL 308a / FILM 242a / LITR 398a, Interpreting Film Masterpieces  David Bromwich and Dudley Andrew
Exploration of seven auteurs from Europe and Hollywood, 1937–1967. Assessment of methods that deepen appreciation of the films and the medium.  WR, HU

* HUMS 456b / AFAM 182b / 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 Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements.  WR, HU

The Franke Seminars

The Shulman Seminar

* HUMS 463b / RLST 117 / RLST 437b, Critical Theories of Science and Religion  Joanna Radin and Noreen Khawaja
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, Gabriel Marcel, Elizabeth Povinelli, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Aicha Beliso-De Jesus, Marilyn Strathern, Catherine Keller, Abou Farman, Webb Keane.  HU

Individual Research and Senior Essay Courses

* HUMS 470a and HUMS 471b, Special Studies in the Humanities  Norma Thompson
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 471b, Special Studies in the Humanities  Norma Thompson
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 491a or b, The Senior Essay  Norma Thompson
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, 2018, if the essay is to be submitted during the spring term, by May 1, 2019, for yearlong or fall-term essays. A rough draft of the essay is due at noon on March 25, 2019 for spring-term essays or on October 29, 2018 for fall-term essays. The final essay is due at noon on April 8, 2019 for spring-term essays or on December 3, 2018 for fall-term essays; late essays will be penalized by a lower grade.  RP