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

* HUMS 018a, Six Pretty Good Kids  
Christopher McGowan  
This course considers literary representations of childhood, the family, and education from antiquity to the present by reading across several traditions and genres, such as epic, tragedy, and the novel, especially the “novel of education,” or Bildungsroman. By examining fictional and non-fictional texts, including readings in psychoanalysis, pedagogical theory, contemporary parenting advice, and political and sociological analysis, we seek to understand seemingly natural or eternal aspects of human life (“childhood,” “the family”) as historically and socially constructed and, thus, as sites for political struggle and creative transformation. We conclude by discussing children's literature and film, and the conflicting visions of childhood and “the future” these forms offer to adults and children. Enrollment limited to first-year students. WR, HU 1½ Course cr

* HUMS 020a / ITAL 020a, Six Pretty Good Dogs  
Simona Lorenzini  
We all have heard the phrase “Dogs are man’s best friends.” For thousands and thousands of years there has been an indissoluble friendship between man and dog, an unwritten covenant, a symbiotic relationship that has no equal in the animal world. Why do we consider them our ‘best friends’? And is this always true? If not, why do we sometimes fear dogs? What role have dogs played in our understanding of being human? This course explores images of dogs in 20th-21st Italian literature through six main categories: a man and his dog; dogs and inhumanity; dogs and exile; dogs and children; dogs and folktales; dogs and modern bestiary. We discuss and close read a variety of texts, which are representative of different strategies for reflecting on the self and on the ‘other’ by unpacking the unstable relationship between anthropomorphism, personification, and humanization. Hopefully, these texts impel us to understand how profoundly the animal is involved in the human and the human in the animal. This course is part of the "Six Pretty Good Ideas" program. Enrollment limited to first-year students. All readings in English. WR, HU 1½ Course cr
* HUMS 021a / NELC 007a, Six Pretty Good Heroes  Kathryn Slanski
Focusing on the figure of the hero through different eras, cultures, and media, this course provides first-year students with a reading-and-writing-intensive introduction to studying the humanities at Yale. The course is anchored around six transcultural models of the hero that similarly transcend boundaries of time and place: the warrior, the sage, the political leader, the proponent of justice, the poet/singer, and the unsung. Our sources range widely across genres, media, periods, and geographies: from the ancient Near Eastern, *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1500 BCE) to the Southeast Asian *Ramayana*, to the Icelandic-Ukrainian climate activism film, *Woman at War* (2018). As part of the Six Pretty Good suite, we explore Yale’s special collections and art galleries to broaden our perspectives on hierarchies of value and to sharpen our skills of observation and working with evidence. Six Pretty Good Heroes is a 1.5 credit course, devoting sustained attention students’ academic writing and is an excellent foundation for the next seven semesters at Yale. Required Friday sessions are reserved for writing labs and visits to Yale collections, as well as one-on-one and small-group meetings with the writing instruction staff. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  WR, HU

* HUMS 032b / AMST 029b / ENGL 029b, Henry Thoreau  Michael Warner
Henry Thoreau played a critical role in the development of environmentalism, American prose, civil rights, and the politics of protest. We read his writing in depth, and with care, understanding it both in its historical context and in its relation to present concerns of democracy and climate change. We read his published writing and parts of the journal, as well as biographical and contextual material. The class makes a field trip to Walden Pond and Concord, learning about climate change at Walden as revealed by Thoreau’s unparalleled documentation of his biotic surroundings. Student’s consider Thoreau’s place in current debates about the environment and politics, and are encouraged to make connection with those debates in a final paper. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  HU

* HUMS 034a, Six Pretty Good Thought Experiments  Jane Mikkelson
Scientists, philosophers, visionaries, and creative writers around the world—in all eras, traditions, and cultures—have often turned to a fascinating form of exploratory inquiry that we today call thought experiments. These short, creative, often wildly outlandish scenarios allow people to ponder some of our most urgent and life-changing questions: How is the universe structured? Are there absolute standards of right conduct? Can we be sure that the world around us is actually real—and does that even matter? This course takes students on an expansive tour of the thought experiment genre, ranging across scientific and philosophical texts, films, and speculative fiction. As we explore what thought experiments are and how they work through contextualized close reading, we also consider broader questions: What does the thought experiment’s form tell us about how we come to know things? Is the thought experiment a clearly defined genre, and does it have a global history? How do thought experiments harness the work of narrative and metaphor, and what interrelations does this reveal between language, imagination, and knowledge? Does science need fiction, and might imagination play a foundational role in the history of ideas and the progress of knowledge? Enrollment limited to first-year students.  WR, HU
Humanities (HUMS)

* HUMS 065a / EDST 065a, Education and the Life Worth Living  Matthew Croasmun
Consideration of education and what it has to do with real life—not just any life, but a life worth living. Engagement with three visions of different traditions of imagining the good life and of imagining education: Confucianism, Christianity, and Modernism. Students will be asked to challenge the fundamental question of the good life and to put that question at the heart of their college education. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  HU

* HUMS 090a / HIST 089a, Thinking about History  Stuart Semmel
An introduction to the discipline of history. Exploration of influential historical narratives; the philosophy of history; the emergence of historical subdisciplines including history from below, microhistory, the new cultural history, and Big History; and interdisciplinary engagement with anthropology, literary criticism, art history, and psychology. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  WR, HU

* HUMS 096a, Collecting History: "Treasures" of Yale  Staff
This course considers the concept of “treasure” by visiting nearly all of Yale's galleries, museums, and library special collections. We explore questions around how these objects and materials were created, how they came to be at Yale, and the considerations and compromises that make up collections of cultural heritage materials. We learn what these objects say about themselves, their creators, their users, and their collectors. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  HU

HUMS 106a / EVST 206a / HIST 127a / HSHM 201a / PHYS 106a, Sustainable Energy: Physics and History  Staff
Students explore the physical logic of energy and power in parallel with the histories of technology for energy exploitation and economic theories of sustainability on the path to modernity. They learn the fundamentals of quantitative analysis of contemporary and historical energy harvesting, its carbon intensity, and climate impact. They also gain an understanding of the historical underpinnings of the current global energy status quo and its relationship to economic theories of sustainability. Mathematical proficiency with algebra is assumed. Students from all academic interests and experiences are welcome in the course.  QR, SC, SO  Course cr

* HUMS 108a / HSHM 451a / RLST 108a, Introduction to the Occult Sciences  Travis Zadeh
This course provides a comparative history of the occult sciences from antiquity to the present. From Galen's occult properties to Newton's pursuit of alchemy, the notion that there are hidden forces in nature has played an immeasurable role in the development of religious thought, scientific reasoning, and literary endeavor. The modern impulse to separate religion from science and science from magic can obscure the centrality of an array of practices and beliefs across time and place. Far from a disenchanted present, magic and the occult are woven through the fabric of modernity. From healing crystals to the personalized astrology of Co-Star, tarot cards to New-Age inflected conspiracy theories, fortune tellers to countless films, we are surrounded by appeals to occult powers. Building on case studies from classical antiquity and Jewish, Christian, and Islamic letters, this course traces the development of the occult sciences through an array of historical periods, social contexts, and discursive materials. Topics include: origins of writing, astrology, alchemy, medicine, natural philosophy, divination, automata, talismans, natural magic, letterism, hermeticism, kabbalah, Neoplatonism,
recipes for summoning demons and angels, persecution, orientalism, colonialism, mesmerism, spiritualism, disenchantment, modernity, capitalism, consumption, and fantasy. Materials are drawn from an array of sources, including: philosophical dialogues, scientific manuals, illuminated manuscripts, encyclopedias, cosmographies, handbooks of practical magic, collections of stories, and movies. In addition to a panoply of primary sources and contemporary scholarship on theory and method, students are introduced to a variety of archival materials in the Yale collections. 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 / LITR 200a / NELC 128a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures Kathryn Slanski
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 129a / CLCV 129a / HIST 159a / NELC 158a / RLST 158a, Jesus to Muhammad: Ancient Christianity to the Rise of Islam Staff
The history of Christianity and the development of Western culture from Jesus to the early Middle Ages. The creation of orthodoxy and heresy; Christian religious practice; philosophy and theology; politics and society; gender; Christian literature in its various forms, up to and including the early Islamic period. HU 0 Course cr

* HUMS 130a / LITR 130a, Fundamentals of Comparison Ayesha Ramachandran and Marta Figlerowicz
An introduction to the conceptual modes and frameworks for comparative study in the humanities as well as the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural traditions of comparative literature. We investigate how and why cultures come into contact and why we might want to engage in acts of comparison. Topics covered are historical and theoretical in scope involving questions about: historical connections; influence and reception; morphology (similarities, resemblances); circulation and networks; colonialism and its consequences; identity and diaspora; aesthetics; humanisms. Anchored in case studies that help to understand the core challenges of our discipline, we explore the relation of literary study to anthropology, linguistics, religious studies, history, and cognitive science. Texts include: Leo Africanus’s Description of Africa with Natalie Zemon
Davis’s *Trickster Travels*; Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan*, its source texts and imitations; Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* alongside Bharadwaj’s *Haider* and Bohannon’s “Shakespeare in the Bush”; Fenollosa, Pound and modernism’s fascination with Chinese poetry; Lu Xun’s engagement with Gogol; Césaire, Glissant and the struggle over créolité; early modern and postcolonial visions of humanism. 

**HUMS 132a or b / ENGL 130a or b / LITR 169a 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.

**HUMS 140b / NELC 121b, The Hero in the Ancient Near East**

Kathryn Slanski

This course is an introduction to of ancient Near Eastern civilization through the prism of its heroes, figures at the intersection of literature, religion, history, and art. While our principle focus is on heroes from ancient Mesopotamia and the Hebrew Bible, students will also have opportunities to compare contemporary heroes to the ANE hero, and to consider if the ANE hero has a modern legacy.

**HUMS 159b / GMAN 212b / LITR 264b, The Art of Failure**

Gabrielle Reid and Kirk Wetters

Everyone will fail someday, even Yale students. In this course, we read and critically analyze literature and film that exemplify failure. In today’s culture of positive thinking, dwelling on failure is considered unproductive or even harmful. But particularly in young adulthood, anything from writing a final paper to getting out of bed in the morning can feel Sisyphean. So why aren’t we talking about it? Instead of shying away from defeat, this course argues for the value of facing failure head-on. We ask questions like: What aspects of failure are inevitable parts of the human condition? What kinds of narrative arcs, vocabularies, tones, and other aesthetic choices characterize how we tell stories of failure? We begin to answer these questions with reference to exemplary failures, historical and fictional alike, and their retellings in the works they inspired. From Sisyphus’ endless struggle with the boulder to those cast as failures by society in Linklater’s film Slacker, our sources show that failure is not a mere necessary step on the road to success, nor a mistake to be avoided. Rather, it occasions the production and consumption of great art.

**HUMS 160a / FILM 205a / GMAN 205a / LITR 244a, The Question of Technology in Continental Theory**

Staff

In Greek mythology, Niobe is the queen of Thebes and mother of six daughters and six sons. She rebelled against the gods and was severely punished for it: her children were killed and she herself was petrified in eternal mourning. In Walter Benjamin’s much-discussed essay ”On the Critique of Violence”, Niobe’s fate is a memorial to a mythical violence that has never been overcome. According to Benjamin, this violence today is linked to an instrumental approach to technology. In the seminar, we discuss media and technology philosophical approaches by Benjamin, Heidegger, Simondon, Haraway, Chude-Sokei, among others, but also texts by Kant, in order to explore the question of how we should understand the entanglement of melancholy, violence and
an instrumental understanding of technology. Furthermore, we discuss how this link between violence, technology and melancholy can be resolved from the perspective of Benjamin’s critique of violence. HU

**HUMS 165b / AMST 200b / SOCY 207b / WGSS 200b, Topics in Human Sexuality**

Joseph Fischel

In 1970, Yale professors and sexuality scholars Lorna and Philip Sarrel introduced what came to be their wildly popular lecture, “Topics in Human Sexuality.” The course, offered at the height of the sexual revolution and shortly after Yale University admitted women undergraduates, was multipurpose: to teach students about pressing, contemporary social problems around sex, gender, and sexuality; to help students learn about their bodies, sexualities, and relationships; to direct students to resources and information about their sexual and reproductive health; and to advance the mission of a liberal arts education, namely, the cultivation of well-rounded, critically engaged, curious, participatory young citizens. This iteration of the course is inspired by the Sarrels’ ambitions, even if we are unlikely to realize them in full. The course is offered in the spirit of a critical sexuality education, critical as in 1) theory- rather than practicum-driven, but nonetheless 2) urgent. As political movements that endanger transgender children, suppress sexual expression, and rescind reproductive rights gain traction, the course offers candid, careful focus on: abortion, sexual education, queer and trans kids, pornography, university sexual politics, hooking up, and breaking up. Along the way, we watch a season of Netflix’s “Sex Education” together. The class (nonexclusively) focuses on social and political problems in the contemporary United States, and examines those problems by drawing upon scholarship in Gender & Sexuality Studies, American Studies, Sociology, Psychology, and Public Law. HU, SO

**HUMS 167a / LITR 378a / NELC 135a, Masterpieces of Arabic Literature**

Shawkat Toorawa

The Arabic literary tradition spans from the 6th-century through to the modern day. In this course, we focus on the first thousand years (600–1600), and read works, and excerpts from works, regarded as masterpieces of Arabic literature. Our readings include the early poetry of the Arabian peninsula (Imru l-Qays, ‘Antarah), the Qur’an, celebrated prose writers, including al-Jahiz, al-Tanukhi, al-Hariri, and al-Tawhidi, and famous poets, including al-Mutanabbi, al-Ma’arri, and Ibn Zaydun. All readings in translation. HU

* **HUMS 171a / GMAN 290a / THST 293a, Politics of Performance**

Sophie Schweiger

The stage is, and always has been, a political space. Ever since its beginnings, theatre has offered ways to rethink and criticize political systems, with the stage serving as a “moral institution” (Schiller) but also as a laboratory for models of representation. The stage also delineates the limits of representation for democratic societies (Rousseau), as it offers the space for experimentation and new modes of being together, being ensemble. The stage also raises the question of its own condition of possibility and the networks it depends on (Jackson). This course revisits the history of German and German speaking theatre since the Enlightenment, and discusses the stage in its relationship to war, the nation state, the social question, femicide and gender politics, the Holocaust, globalization, and 21st century migration. Readings include works by G.E. Lessing, Friedrich Schiller, Hugo v. Hofmannstahl, Georg Büchner, Peter Weiss, Ida Fink, Dea Lohar, Elfriede Jelinek, Christoph Schlingensief, Heiner Müller, and Elsa Bernstein. HU
* HUMS 172a / ENGL 312a, Interpretations: George Eliot’s Middlemarch  Ruth Yeazell
An intensive study of George Eliot’s Middlemarch (1871-72) — a work she called a “home epic” and Virginia Woolf declared “one of the few English novels for grown-up people.” Our close reading of Middlemarch itself is framed by a brief selection from George Eliot’s essays and short fiction, as well as by a more extended study of some critical responses, both Victorian and modern. HU

* HUMS 178a / THST 388a, Revenge Tragedy and Moral Ambiguity  Toni Dorfman
A study of plays and films variously construed as revenge tragedy that raise aesthetic and ethical issues, including genre, retribution, “just wars,” public vs. private justice, and the possibility of resolution. How questions of crime, punishment, and justice have been posed in drama, from classical Greece through the twentieth century. HU

HUMS 180a / ITAL 310a / LITR 183a, Dante in Translation  Staff
A critical reading of Dante’s Divine Comedy and selections from the minor works, with an attempt to place Dante’s work in the intellectual and social context of the late Middle Ages by relating literature to philosophical, theological, and political concerns. No knowledge of Italian required. Course conducted in English. HU  o Course cr

* HUMS 185a / ENGL 419a / HSAR 460a, Writing about Contemporary Figurative Art  Margaret Spillane
A workshop on journalistic strategies for looking at and writing about contemporary paintings of the human figure. Practitioners and theorists of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Formerly ENGL 247. WR, HU

* HUMS 186a / FILM 369a / RSEE 244a / RUSS 222a, War Games  Staff
Dismissed, mocked, feared or loved for decades, video games have become a staple of contemporary media, art, and popular culture, studied alongside traditional print media and film. They eclipse the global yearly revenue of both film and music industries combined, leaving their financial significance undeniable. What remains understudied, however, is the political and cultural significance of the medium. War Games is a seminar dedicated to the intersection of video games and political violence (both real and imaginary) in a global and particularly post-Cold War context. Students learn to recognize patterns of ideological communication in video games while developing close reading skills of literature and digital media alike. We combine the study of video games with broader inquiries into the media that circulate through the game mediasphere, including literature, social and news media, and film. Playing games and reading books, we pose the following questions: How do players “perform” war in games, and how might they resist or subvert expected performances? How indeed are we as readers and players affected by the type of media we consume? What is an adaptation? How do adaptations influence or potentially reshape our relationships with the source material? What themes and ideas are revealed effectively through one medium versus another? Why do certain literary traditions (such as classical Russian literature) provide such fruitful ground for video game adaptation? What are the political implications for the ideologies present in a video game given the globalized position of the medium? Assigned readings include novels, short stories, news media, and internet forums alongside a range of secondary materials, including film and media
theory, intellectual and media histories, digital anthropology, reception studies, and interviews. HU

**HUMS 190b / FILM 240b / LITR 143b, Cinema in the World** Moira Fradinger
Development of ways to engage films from around the globe productively. Close analysis of a dozen complex films, with historical contextualization of their production and cultural functions. Attention to the development of critical skills. Includes weekly screenings, each followed immediately by discussion. HU

* **HUMS 200a / ENGL 205a / LITR 195a / MUSI 462a, Medieval Songlines** Ardis Butterfield
Introduction to medieval song in England via modern poetic theory, material culture, affect theory, and sound studies. Song is studied through foregrounding music as well as words, words as well as music. WR, HU

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

* **HUMS 202b / HIST 244Jb / JDST 354b, Modern Jewish Political Thought: Jewish Politics Through Texts, Philosophy, and History** David Sorkin
This course examines the canonical texts of modern Jewish political thinking from the seventeenth to the late twentieth century. Students engage with the major thinkers and major political movements of the period. WR, HU

**HUMS 206a / ENGL 191a / LITR 318a / MMES 215a / NELC 201a, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now** Robyn Creswell
The medieval cycle of tales known as The Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights is among the most beloved and influential story collections of world literature. It is an “ocean” of tales that has much to teach us about how stories work, whether they must come to an end, and our apparently bottomless desire to hear them. We will spend the semester in the company of genies and princes, thieves and slaves, mass murderers, detectives, and orientalists. We will also explore the ways in which the stories of the Nights have been adapted by later writers, such as Djebbar, Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Mahfouz, as well as by filmmakers such Pasolini and—of course—Walt Disney. The course is intended to introduce students to the major tales of the Nights and to the classical Arabic literary tradition more broadly. It also seeks to develop their skills of close reading and analysis, particularly through a consideration of literary and filmic adaptations. HU, TR

* **HUMS 224b / HIST 210Jb, Hobbes and Galileo: Materialism and the Emergence of Modernity** William Klein
Hobbes considered himself a disciple of Galileo, but as a 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 225a / ANTH 237a / GMAN 233a / LITR 242a / PHIL 219a, Karl Marx's Capital**

A careful reading of Karl Marx's classic critique of capitalism, *Capital* volume 1, a work of philosophy, political economy, and critical social theory that has had a significant global readership for over 150 years. Selected readings also from *Capital* volumes 2 and 3. HU TR 0 Course cr

* **HUMS 228a / EVST 228a / HIST 459a / LITR 345a, Climate Change and the Humanities** Katja Lindskog

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

* **HUMS 241a / AFAM 182a / AMST 286a / ENGL 182a, James Baldwin's American Scene** Staff

In-depth examination of James Baldwin's canon, tracking his work as an American artist, citizen, and witness to United States society, politics, and culture during the Cold War, the Civil Rights era, and the Black Arts Movement. HU 0 Course cr

* **HUMS 253a / ENGL 346a / RLST 233a, Poetry and Faith** Christian Wiman

Issues of faith examined through poetry, with a focus on modern poems from 1850 to the present. Poems from various faith traditions studied, as well as to secular and antireligious poetry. HU

* **HUMS 261b / HIST 412Jb / NELC 364b / RLST 264b, The Psalms, A Cultural History of Ancient Prayer** Stephen Davis

This course introduces students to the Book of Psalms and its significant cultural and religious impact in ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course is organized in three units. Unit 1 focuses on the text of the Psalms, with special attention to their literary forms, editorial organization, and early ritual context in ancient Israel. Unit 2 focuses on the reception and use of the Psalms in late ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with special attention to matters of translation, interpretation, worship, prayer, and scriptural authority. Unit 3 focuses on material and sensory encounters with the Psalms from antiquity to the present day within these three religious traditions—case studies related to tactile and visual contact with the physical book, oral and aural engagement through song or chant, and embodied forms of writing, reciting, and enacting the Psalms in the context of ritual practice, including magical spells. The goal of the course is thus to trace the life and afterlife—to write the textual and extra-textual “biography,” as it were—of a major biblical book. HU

* **HUMS 263a / EP&E 372a / PLSC 329a, Thucydides** Daniel Schillinger

In this seminar, we undertake a careful examination of Thucydides' so-called History of the Peloponnesian War in its entirety. Central problems include the psychological and structural causes of war, the relation of justice to necessity, the susceptibility of democracy to imperialism and demagoguery, and the experience of war itself. We also engage with the secondary literature on Thucydides. WR, HU
* HUMS 265a / ENGL 253a, Reading Ulysses: Modernist Classic and Postcolonial Epic  Joe Cleary and Christopher McGowan
An extended reading of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) as modernist and postcolonial epic. Beginning with considerations of the relationship of modern epic and novel, the class will study Joyce’s re-working of Homeric epic in modern Irish, “World Literature,” Western and postcolonial literary contexts. The seminar will engage with the style, narrative form, and symbolic meaning of Joyce’s work and survey some of the critical controversies and interpretative challenges that *Ulysses* has provoked over the last century.  HU

HUMS 270a / CHNS 200a / EALL 200a / EAST 240a, The Chinese Tradition  Staff
An introduction to the literature, culture, and thought of premodern China, from the beginnings of the written record to the turn of the twentieth century. Close study of textual and visual primary sources, with attention to their historical and cultural backdrops. Students enrolled in CHNS 200 join a weekly Mandarin-language discussion section. No knowledge of Chinese required for students enrolled in EALL 200. Students enrolled in CHNS 200 must have L5 proficiency in Mandarin or permission of the course instructor.  HU  TR 0 Course cr

HUMS 280a, What Matters Most  Matthew Croasmun and Ryan McAnnally-Linz
"What is a good life?” is a daunting question. While each of us needs to answer it, it is almost impossible to do so all at once. This course divides the question of the good life into smaller, but still very significant questions, like: Who do we answer to for the shape of our lives? What should we hope for? What is the role of suffering in a good life? Readings and discussion-heavy lectures engage a number of ancient and contemporary voices from a variety of religious, philosophical, ideological, and cultural perspectives. Through a series of small writing assignments, students respond to each of life’s big questions for themselves and synthesize these responses into their own account of what matters and why.  WR, HU  0 Course cr

* HUMS 281a / FILM 310a / GMAN 331a / LITR 416a, Paper: Material and Medium  Austen Hinkley
Paper is one of the most ubiquitous and indispensable media of the modern era. Although we are (still) surrounded by it, paper tends to recede into the background, working best when we do not notice it at all. This course sets out to challenge our understanding of paper as a neutral or passive bearer of inscriptions by foregrounding its material quality. Our focus rests in equal parts on the media history of paper and paper works of art—among them many literary texts—that reflect or take advantage of their medium. Studying materials and histories from the early modern period to the present, we uncover paper’s status as a commodity bound up in a complex web of economic processes, as an instrument of political power, as a gendered and racialized object, and as a material that can be cut, shuffled, and even eaten. Ultimately, we investigate how paper is still central to our lives, even in the age of tablets and PDFs. Readings include Emily Dickinson’s envelope poems, Robert Walser’s “Microscripts,” and M. NourbeSe Philip’s “Zong!” The class makes several visits to the Beinecke Library for hands-on work with paper materials.  WR, HU

* HUMS 292a / EALL 213a / PHIL 205a / RLST 211a, Philosophy, Religion, and Literature in Medieval China  Staff
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.  

**HUMS 300a, Environmental Digital Humanities**  
Sayan Bhattacharyya  
The course seeks to help students develop an integrated understanding of environmental and ecological issues from the point of view of the digital humanities, where the humanities are broadly understood (incorporating literature, the arts, philosophy, and cultural studies) in conjunction with digital technologies. Thus, the course exposes students to an understanding of how two increasingly important issues in the modern world — digital technology and environmental concerns — intersect.

* HUMS 302a / PLSC 303a, Demagoguery and Democracy  
Bryan Garsten  
This course offers historical and theoretical perspective on contemporary debates about democratic leadership and political discourse. How can demagoguery be distinguished from healthy forms of popular leadership? Under what conditions do demagogues tend to emerge? What institutional arrangements and political strategies help to manage demagogues? The course traces these themes through a set of conversations that begin in ancient Greek and Roman texts on the art of persuasion and continue through the Renaissance and early modern period and into revolutionary and post-revolutionary thinking about leaders’ claims to speak for the people. Contemporary issues including populism and the impact of social media are addressed.

* HUMS 303a / EDST 281a / HIST 404a / 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.

* HUMS 314b / GMAN 211b / LITR 441b / PHIL 412b, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud  
Austen Hinkley  
The course is designed as an introduction to the thought of these three towering figures in the German-language intellectual tradition and to their contributions to our attempts to understand the human mind and society. We read seminal essays as well as (excerpts from) longer works, including Marx’s Capital, Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality and
Thus Spake Zarathustra, and Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams. But we also look at what came before and after these thinkers, considering—among others—Kant, Ludwig Feuerbach, Melanie Klein, Adorno, and Foucault; and we think about the relevance of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud for the understanding of our own times.  

* HUMS 323a / HIST 236Ja, Truth and Sedition  
**William Klein**
The truth can set you free, but of course it can also get you into trouble. How do the constraints on the pursuit and expression of “truth” change with the nature of the censoring regime, from the family to the church to the modern nation-state? What causes regimes to protect perceived vulnerabilities in the systems of knowledge they privilege? What happens when conflict between regimes implicates modes of knowing? Are there types of truth that any regime would—or should—find dangerous? What are the possible motives and pathways for self-censorship? We begin with the revolt of the Hebrews against polytheistic Egypt and the Socratic questioning of democracy, and end with various contemporary cases of censorship within and between regimes. We consider these events and texts, and their reverberations and reversals in history, in relation to select analyses of the relations between truth and power, including Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Brecht, Leo Strauss, Foucault, Chomsky, Waldron, Zizek, and Xu Zhongrun.  

* HUMS 326a, Cultural Studies beyond Earth  
**Gary Tomlinson**
This course is a thought experiment conducted with theory and data drawn from astro- or exobiology, evolutionary science, ethology, and cultural and semiotic theory. Scientists interested in life on other planets understand the need to start their inquiries from the only example of life we know, on earth. They work to extrapolate, from earthly biology, the principles of a universal biology: conditions that must hold anywhere life has arisen. Can we form a universal cultural study, extending their extrapolation toward conditions that enable culture wherever it might arise? We begin with an overview of universal biology, then examine cultures of humans and other animals on earth, and finally approach theoretically the foundations on which they arise, including semiotic theory and questions concerning communication and technics.  

* HUMS 340a / ENGL 244a / LITR 344a, The Detective Story: Solving Mysteries from Oedipus to Sherlock  
**Paul Grimstad**
The course looks closely at detective stories, novels and films, with attention to the narrative structure of criminal enigma, logical investigation and denouement (whodunit, howdunit), and considers “genre” more broadly. Starting with the proto-detective story *Oedipus Rex*—in which tragic drama takes the form of a murder mystery—we move on to Edgar Allan Poe’s invention of the genre proper in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Purloined Letter.” From there we go to Poe’s “golden age” inheritors Arthur Conan Doyle, G.K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, and Dorothy Sayers, as well as the adaptation of Doyle’s tales for the BBC series *Sherlock*. We also spend time on American “hard boiled” writers (Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* and John Huston’s 1941 film adaptation of the novel; Chester Himes’ *The Real Cool Killers*); fiction which draws upon the conventions of detective stories without being genre fiction (Nabokov, Borges), non-fiction works which have the structure of a detective story (Freud’s “Wolf Man” case study); neo-noir film (*Chinatown*); works that fuse detective fiction and science-fiction (*Minority Report*) and recent film homage to “golden age” whodunnits (*Knives Out*). Students write essays making interpretive
claims and using evidence from works on the syllabus, with emphasis on writing clear prose in support of an original argument.  HU

**HUMS 363a, AI as Global Cultural Artifact**  Sayan Bhattacharyya
The course seeks to help develop an understanding of how Artificial Intelligence has been imagined, in global culture, by writers and artists hailing from, or affiliating with, various parts of the globe; and also how, to some extent, human cultural imagination and demands have influenced developments in AI. We address these questions in a global sense as much as we can: while the culture of Western modernity will figure very prominently in the readings and discussion, we take a more enlarged perspective, with some of the readings being about, and/or from, places and imaginaries beyond the West: China, Afrofuturism, and South Asia. Readings consist mostly of imaginative literary works (short stories, and excerpts from longer novels), but also encompasses some non-fiction and graphic fiction. At least two weeks of class also focuses on non-textual culture (theater, film, paintings, and music that is connected to AI). The readings combine with assignments involving both traditional essays (midterm essay and final essay) and short assignments (assigned on a rolling basis, which let students explore the questions addressed in the course to a further extent).  HU

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

* HUMS 377a / ENGL 341a / EVST 409a / LITR 404a, *Nature Poetry, from the Classics to Climate Change*  Jonathan Kramnick
Poetry of the natural world, beginning with classical pastoral and ending with lyric responses to climate change. We consider how poetry attempts to make sense of our interaction with the earth at important moments of change, from pre-industrial agriculture to global capitalism and the Anthropocene.  WR, HU

This course explores the Western conception of the human place in the natural world as it has shifted across four centuries. It features, alongside corollary readings, close study of three classic texts: Galileo’s *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632), Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* (1744), and Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) #fundamental texts locating humans in the cosmos, in society, and in natural history, respectively. It finishes with a new work, Terrence Deacon’s *Incomplete Nature* (2011), an attempt to explain the emergence of mind from the natural world.

No prerequisites, though the challenging nature of the materials suggests that this course will be aimed mainly at students beyond their first year.  HU
* HUMS 388a / ENGL 289a / LITR 389a / PHIL 385a / RLST 380a, The Force of Life
Nancy Levene and James Wood
The point of departure for this course is a line from James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time*: “To be sensual, I think, is to respect and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself, and to be present in all that one does, from the effort of loving to the breaking of bread.” We study four authors—Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Baldwin, and Jacques Derrida—in light of the values Baldwin expresses and their challenges. Our work between philosophy and fiction involves striving to read each text according to the ideas it itself advances, as well as reading for connections and cross-pollinations. WR, HU TR

* HUMS 411b, Life Worth Living
Matthew Croasmun
Comparative exploration of the shape of the life advocated by several of the world’s normative traditions, both religious and nonreligious. Concrete instantiations of these traditions explored through contemporary exemplars drawn from outside the professional religious or philosophical spheres. Readings from the founding texts of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Marxism, and utilitarianism. HU

* HUMS 422a / FILM 333a / LITR 351a, Early Film Theory and Modernity
Francesco Casetti
For a long time, early film theory and criticism have been overlooked and underestimated. However, their recent rediscovery has highlighted their crucial role in framing film as a "modern" invention. While discussing what then was a recent invention, early film theory and criticism tackled some of the main characteristic of modern life: speed, excitation, contingency, openness, subjectivity, circulation, etc. By doing so, they underscored the parallel between modern experience and filmic representations. On the screen—they claimed—spectators do not only see the world in which they live, but also the effects of the political, industrial, and social revolutions on this world. At the same time, early film theory and criticism developed an ideal of “modern” art and “modern” language, through a systematic exploration of filmic style and iconography. According to them, film was the epitome of a “new art” for “new times.” The course explores the idea of modernity as it developed in the Western world between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Despite this limitation, we do not meet a uniform landscape; on the contrary, ideological differences and national identities played a major role in defining the perspectives forged by film theorists and critics. While considering texts from France (Delluc, Epstein), Germany (Arnheim, Kracauer), Middle-Europe (Bálazs, Lukács, Tille), Italy (Papini, Thovez), Soviet Union (Eisenstein, Vertov, Pudovkin) and USA (Lindsay, Freeburg, Münsterberg), the course systematically and critically compares them and their traditions. Every week there is a screening with films representative of the time. When possible, we use original prints. HU

* HUMS 427a or b / ENGL 456a or b / JDST 316a or b / LITR 348a or b, The Practice of Literary Translation
Staff
This course combines a seminar on the history and theory of translation (Tuesdays) with a hands-on workshop (Thursdays). The readings lead us through a series of case studies comparing, on the one hand, multiple translations of given literary works and, on the other, classic statements about translation—by translators themselves and prominent theorists. We consider both poetry and prose from the Bible, selections from Chinese, Greek, and Latin verse, classical Arabic and Persian literature, prose by Cervantes, Borges, and others, and modern European poetry (including Pushkin,
Baudelaire, and Rilke). Students are expected to prepare short class presentations, participate in a weekly workshop, try their hand at a series of translation exercises, and undertake an intensive, semester-long translation project. Proficiency in a foreign language is required. **HU**

* **HUMS 428b / ENGL 483b / JDST 343b / LITR 305b**, Advanced Literary Translation
  
  Robyn Creswell
  
  A sequel to LITR 348 or its equivalent, this course brings together advanced and seriously committed students of literary translation, especially (but not only) those who are doing translation-related senior theses. Students must apply to the class with a specific project in mind, that they have been developing or considering, and that they will present on a regular basis throughout the semester. Discussion of translations-in-progress are supplemented by short readings that include model works from the world of literary translation, among them introductions and pieces of criticism, as well as reflections by practitioners treating all phases of their art. The class is open to undergraduates and graduate students who have taken at least one translation workshop. By permission of the instructor. Prerequisite: LITR 348.

* **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 445a / ENGL 343a / FILM 422a**, Modernities: The Aesthetics of Adaptation
  
  Katja Lindskog
  
  Adaptations of literary texts are the bread and butter of visual narrative media like TV and film. Adaptations of certain authors and texts have given rise to entire sub-genres and cottage industries. We consider what adaptations of literary texts, particularly very famous and beloved texts, might help us understand better about the texts themselves, and about the needs and expectations of the audiences of their adaptations. To that purpose, this course explores the purposes and effects of adaptation through a study of a variety of screen versions of adapted texts by authors including Jane Austen, Emily St. John Mandel, and Geoffrey Chaucer. Assigned readings include both literary texts and screen adaptations. **HU**

* **HUMS 446b / EVST 349b / HIST 449Jb / HSHM 449b / URBN 382b**, Critical Data Visualization: History, Theory, and Practice
  
  Bill Rankin
  
  Critical analysis of the creation, use, and cultural meanings of data visualization, with emphasis on both the theory and the politics of visual communication. Seminar discussions include close readings of historical data graphics since the late eighteenth century and conceptual engagement with graphic semiology, ideals of objectivity and honesty, and recent approaches of feminist and participatory data design. Course assignments focus on the research, production, and workshopping of students’ own data graphics; topics include both historical and contemporary material. No prior software experience is required; tutorials are integrated into weekly meetings. Basic
proficiency in standard graphics software is expected by the end of the term, with optional support for more advanced programming and mapping software.  

* HUMS 447b / GMAN 395b / LITR 448b / PHIL 313b, Birth of the Political: Early Modern and 20th century  
  Rudiger Campe  
  Early modern European works on colonial war, sovereignty, and politics, 16th to 17th centuries (by Sepúlveda, Grotius, Machiavelli, Lipsius (Neo-Stoicism), Hobbes) are read in conjunction with 20th c. debates from the inter-war period to ca. 1968 (by Schmitt, Kantorowicz, Benjamin, Oestreich, Foucault, authors who refer back to the modern early works and have importantly shaped our modern understanding of ‘the political’ (and, with it, the notion of the ‘early modern’)). The course is interested in critically tracing the echoes regarding ‘the political’ between early modernity and our own times.  

* HUMS 452a / EVST 266a / LAST 350a / SPAN 365a, Ecologies of Culture: Latin American Environmental Aesthetics  
  Santiago Acosta  
  In the age of rising sea levels, mass extinction, and carbon-driven climate change, can culture and the arts remain unchanged? This course focuses on the intersections between aesthetics and ecological practices in the context of the Anthropocene, a proposed geological epoch wherein humans have become a major geological force shaping the planet. It challenges traditional approaches by examining how culture and the arts can help to understand and respond to environmental crises. Discussions and readings emphasize the role of culture and aesthetics as agents and producers of environmental knowledge, highlighting their potential to challenge socio-ecological relations. Throughout the semester, students explore various themes, including colonialism, anthropocentrism, human-animal relations, fossil capitalism, indigenous ontologies, and the impact of extractive industries on territories and bodies in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Latinx world. Students engage with works by established and emerging artists, aiming to produce ecocritical knowledge about the current climate and environmental crisis. The course also offers a panoramic view of Latin American culture by examining some key historical events and authors whose works can shed light on cultural and ideological processes at the root of climate change. By the end of the semester, students can formulate research questions that are critical to the field of Latin American environmental humanities, as well as produce papers that are relevant to a broader debate about culture and ecology. Lastly, the course hopes to motivate students—beyond the classroom—to examine their place in an increasingly warming world. Taught in Spanish.  

* HUMS 453b / FREN 405b / HIST 204Jb / HSAR 373b, Notre-Dame de Paris  
  Howard Bloch and Paul Freedman  
  Against the background of Gothic cathedral building in the High Middle Ages, we study from multiple perspectives the building of Notre-Dame within the teaching and preaching culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with special focus on medieval Paris. Interdisciplinary materials include religious, literary, historical, and philosophic works alongside of music and the visuals—stained glass and sculpture—that are such an integral part of Gothic architecture. We also consider the history of Notre-Dame de Paris since the Middle Ages, especially Viollet-le-Duc’s nineteenth-century restoration, to be read alongside Victor Hugo’s Notre-Dame of Paris, and in the context of the rebuilding and reopening after the fire of 2019.
* HUMS 467a, Interpretations Seminar: Hart Crane  Riley Soles
Before his tragic death at the age of 32, and with a comparatively small total output,
Hart Crane produced some of the most astonishing and influential poems of the
20th century. This seminar will focus on close-reading Hart Crane’s complete poetic
oeuvre, with sustained attention to his volume of poems *White Buildings* and his short
epic *The Bridge*. We will locate Crane as a queer American poet in his historical and
cultural context in the early 20th century, writing alongside and against his Modernist
contemporaries. We will also investigate Crane’s relationship to Romanticism by
reading his poetry as a continuation and revision of Romantic precursors in both the
English and American poetic traditions. Special attention will be paid to Crane’s unique
poetics of catachresis, as evidenced through his poetry but also as articulated in his
letters. Finally, we will consider the religious elements of Crane’s poetry and poetics
by putting him conversation with hermeticism, Gnosticism, Biblical prophecy, and
visionary experience.  HU

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

* HUMS 480a / GMAN 288a / LITR 482a / PHIL 469a, The Mortality of the Soul:
  From Aristotle to Heidegger  Martin Hagglund
This course explores fundamental philosophical questions of the relation between
matter and form, life and spirit, necessity and freedom, by proceeding from Aristotle’s
analysis of the soul in *De Anima* and his notion of practical agency in the *Nicomachean
Ethics*. We study Aristotle in conjunction with seminal works by contemporary neo-
Aristotelian philosophers (Korsgaard, Nussbaum, Brague, and McDowell). We in turn
pursue the implications of Aristotle’s notion of life by engaging with contemporary
philosophical discussions of death that take their point of departure in Epicurus (Nagel,
Williams, Scheffler). We conclude by analyzing Heidegger’s notion of constitutive
mortality, in order to make explicit what is implicit in the form of the soul in Aristotle.
HU

* HUMS 491a, The Senior Essay  Paul Grimstad
Independent library-based research under faculty supervision. To register, students
must consult the director of undergraduate studies no later than the end of registration
period in the previous term. A written plan of study approved by a faculty adviser must
be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies.  RP