

NEW HUMANITIES COURSES AY 18-19

Hum/H 11 – Love and Death: Using Demography to Study the History of Europe from 1700. *9 units (3-0-6); first, third terms.* Demographic events - births, marriages, deaths - have always been highly responsive to changes in the local environment. Decisions about when to marry, how many children to have, or what kind of household to live in have always been closely correlated to decisions people take in other areas of their lives and, as a result, can tell us a great deal about the economic, social, and cultural worlds people inhabit. This course examines differences in demographic trends in Europe across space and time, from 1700 to the present, as well as existing explanations for these differences, including political economic factors, social and cultural norms, biology and disease environments. Some topics include: the demographic effects of war, industrialization, and urbanization; changes related to the emergence of reliable contraceptive technologies; changes related to the expansion of economic opportunities for women; the effects of government policies on demographic decisions. Instructor: Dennison.

En 85 – Poetry Writing. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* When William Blake wrote "to see a World in a Grain of Sand," he tapped into poetry's power to model the universe. For instance, once we set up a simile between "world" and "grain of sand", we can test this hypothesis of sameness. How is sand like the world? Where will the model fail? And what might that tell us? Imagery, sensory language, arguments, ideas, and verse form itself can lead poetry toward power and discovery. This pursuit can reach from the page into one's own life. We will work hard together on poems, our own and one another's. Instructor: Factor.

H 113 – The Troubadours. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* Our literary tradition in the West goes back to the troubadours, who were the first poets writing in a spoken language (i.e. not Latin) who have had a continuous influence ever since. Who were these poets, and why did what they created have such a decisive impact? Some have claimed that the troubadours invented our basic assumptions about the relations between the self and the world. Certainly they affected ideas about the status of women, since they sang of poets in service to their unattainable ladies. We shall examine the troubadours' interactions with their religious culture, showing how they were affected by Islam and Christianity, and how in turn they helped prepare the early thirteenth century explosion of religious mysticism. Our aim is to assess their contribution to building the basis for modern culture. We shall analyze how these poets developed a unique concept of subjectivity that made it possible for the self to acquire emotional knowledge about the world. In turn, that emotional basis became a foundation for the self that acquires scientific knowledge. Instructor: Motzkin.

H/HPS 186 – From Plato to Pluto: Maps, Exploration and Culture from Antiquity to the Present. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* This course covers a broad range of topics in the history of maps and exploration from Antiquity to the present. These topics range from the earliest visualizations of earth and space in the Classical world to contemporary techniques in interplanetary navigation. By way of maps, students will explore various ways in which different cultures have conceptualized and navigated earth and space. While maps emulate the world as

perceived by the human eye, they, in fact, comprise a set of observations and perceptions of the relationship between bodies in space and time. Thus, students will study maps, and the exploration they enable, as windows to the cultures that have produced them, not only as scientific and technical artifacts to measure and navigate our world. Instructors: Wey-Gomez, Ceva.

H 114 – Mysticism and the Self. *9 units (3-0-6); second term.* Creating the emotional self may have been as significant for the modern project as was formulating an appropriate theory of knowledge. One source for the modern conception of the self lay in the mystical tradition. We shall examine Medieval mysticism, beginning with Saint Francis of Assisi and continuing through the Dominican followers of Meister Eckhardt. We shall also look at the Dutch mystic Jan van Ruusbroec, and then turn our attention to the woman mystics, such as, for example, Marguerite Porete, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe. Finally we shall examine the sixteenth century Spanish mystics, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Our focus will be on the way these mystics think about themselves in relation to God. We shall try to find out whether the conceptions of the self in this tradition have anything to do with how we think about the self. Instructor: Motzkin.

Hum/En 39 – Contemporary American Fiction. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* This course will engage works of contemporary American fiction, with particular attention paid to experimental narrative strategies and their effects, including non-chronological storytelling, metafictionality, and narrative omissions. Notably, the literature we will read is set during and/or in the aftermath of World War II and/or the Vietnam War. How do the novel's central characters understand their roles in American society before, during, and beyond wartime? We will consider the ways in which social movements, including the civil rights and women's liberation movements, informed these works of fiction and how such literature resonates in our current moment. Authors/texts studied will include John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), Joan Didion's *Democracy* (1984), and Susan Choi's *American Woman* (2003). Instructor: Sherazi.

En 141 – Contemporary African American Literature. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* This course will engage works of contemporary African American literature, including Ishmael Reed's experimental novel *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) and Octavia Butler's time-travel novel *Kindred* (1979) and selected Afrofuturist short stories. We will read critical essays about temporality and consider these authors' use of temporal strategies, including anachronisms, non-linear narration, historiography, and the creation of speculative worlds. How does the artistic project of narrating the racialized past create possibilities for imagining alternative futures? The course will analyze the role of slavery, trauma, and collective memory in our readings, and it will set these literary texts in conversation with Afrofuturist music and visual culture from the 1970s to the present. Students will have the opportunity to examine archival materials from the Huntington Library related to Octavia Butler's published fiction Instructor: Sherazi.

En 142 – Post-1945 American Literature and 'The Death of the Author'. *9 units (3-0-6); second term.* This course will explore the ambiguous status of literature that is published in the wake of an author's death. Should "unfinished" work be edited and published in the late author's name?

What if the author left behind no express wishes for her/his unpublished writing or asked that it be destroyed? Alongside such questions, we will analyze posthumously published post-1945 American literature's formal features and its engagements with socio-political transformations related to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Course readings will include Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969), as well as posthumously published modernist fiction and poetry by authors including Ralph Ellison, Sylvia Plath, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. Instructor: Sherazi.

Hum/PI 43 – Meaning In Life. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* Experiencing one's life as meaningful is important for most people. Yet, what is it for a life to be meaningful? This course explores philosophical inquiries into meaning in life, examining such questions as, How does meaning in life relate to moral, epistemic, aesthetic, and hedonic final values in life? What does meaning in life imply regarding the metaphysics of value? What is the relation between meaning and welfare, achievement, and goal-directedness? What sort of activities, from work to leisure, can be sources of meaning in life? Drawing principally on recent work in analytic philosophy, the course will also examine whether scientific approaches, principally neuroscience and psychology, can illuminate the nature of meaning in life and will examine recent nihilistic challenges to meaning in life. Instructor: Quartz.

H 150 – America in the 1960s. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* The course adopts a thematic approach to the "long 1960s," engaging in depth with the political, social, and cultural trends that shaped the decade. Topics include the African American struggle for civil rights, the "urban crisis," Cold War culture, liberalism at high tide, the Vietnam War, sexual liberation, the New Left and counterculture, as well as the rise of the New Right. Throughout, the course interrogates the privileged role given the 1960s in American history, questioning to what extent the decade marked a departure from the American past or a continuation of long-running trends. Instructor: Savage.

Hum/H 3 – The United States in the Twentieth Century. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* Designed to introduce students to the academic study of history, this course examines key issues and events that shaped the political, social, and cultural history of the United States in the Twentieth Century. Through a wide variety of historical sources - including primary documents, fiction, and music - students will explore issues such as popular culture, immigration and labor, the civil rights movement, political realignment, and American intervention abroad. Instructor: Savage.

H 151 – The Long(er) Civil Rights Movement: From Emancipation to Black Lives Matter. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* Taking historian Jacqueline Dowd Hall's call to expand the chronology of the civil rights narrative rather generously, this course explores African American freedom struggles over a period bookended by emancipation and the Black Lives Matter movement. Through an analysis of a wide array of historical sources, the course will also examine topics such as Reconstruction, the rise of Jim Crow, the Great Migration, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Northern and Western segregation, and mass incarceration. Instructor: Savage.

Hum/PI 44 – Philosophy Through Science Fiction. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* This course will provide a broad introduction to philosophy using examples from science fiction to make abstract philosophical problems vivid. Topics may include: time travel and the reality of the past and future; teleportation and what makes someone the same person over time; fictional tales of extended deception and Cartesian skepticism; futuristic utopias and the question of what make a life good; the moral status of aliens and animals; intelligent robots and the relation between mind and body; parallel universes and the philosophical foundations of quantum physics. Instructor: Sebens.

Hum/En 29 – Dream Narratives. *9 units (3-0-6); first term.* Dream narratives reveal as much about cultural beliefs and superstitions as they do about techniques of narration and interpretation. This course investigates key developments in the literature on dreams and dream interpretations during a time period when they were subjected to competing religious and scientific interpretations. Examples will focus on the time period between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and will include texts by Descartes, Calderón, Shakespeare, and Diderot. Instructor: Holland.

Hum/En 33 – Modern Metamorphoses. *9 units (3-0-6); second term.* Narratives of metamorphosis have traditionally used their dramatic subject matter - a radical change of form - as a vehicle for social criticism. This course explores the ways in which twentieth-century writers experiment with the concept of metamorphosis to take on the most pressing political and social issues of their day, including slavery, women's rights, and critiques of capitalist excess. Readings to include Kafka, Garnett, Orwell, Tawada, and Erpenbeck. Instructor: Holland.

En 150 – Chaos and Literature. *9 units (3-0-6); second term.* We tend to think of literary texts as models of a stable poetic order, but modern and postmodern writers conduct increasingly bold experiments to test the contrary. This class explores how writers from the nineteenth century onward draw upon ancient and contemporary concepts of chaos to test out increasingly sophisticated models of disorder through writing. Readings to include Lucretius, Serres, Calvino, Barth, Stoppard, and Kehlmann. Instructor: Holland.

En 129 – Early Irish Literature. *9 units (3-0-6); third term.* In the most recent Star Wars films, the young Jedi Rey finds Luke Skywalker hiding out on a remote island covered with ancient stone huts. These scenes were filmed in a real place: Skellig Micheal, a medieval monastic site off the coast of Ireland. What was the culture that produced this beautiful and strange place like? This course will introduce students to the literature and culture of early Ireland. We will read about a great war waged by the warrior queen Medbh to steal a famous bull; accounts of travel to a mysterious otherworld in the West; the story of the transformation of a king into a bird, cursed to live in tree tops and recite verse for the rest of his life; vicious and entertaining satirical poetry; and intricate poems written by professional poets for their powerful patrons. All texts will be read in English translation, but this course will also include a basic introduction to Irish, the Celtic language still spoken in Ireland, and the island's primary literary and popular language up to the modern era. Instructor: Klement.

PI/CNS/NB/Bi/Psy 161 – Consciousness. *9 units (3-0-6); second term. Prerequisites: None, but strongly suggest prior background in philosophy of mind and basic neurobiology (such as Bi150).* One of the last great challenges to our understanding of the world concerns conscious experience. What exactly is it? How is it caused or constituted? And how does it connect with the rest of our science? This course will cover philosophy of mind, cognitive psychology, and cognitive neuroscience in a mixture of lectures and in-class discussion. There are no formal prerequisites, but background in philosophy (equivalent to PI41, PI110) and in neuroscience (equivalent to BI/CNS 150) is strongly recommended and students with such background will be preferentially considered. Limited to 20. Instructors: Eberhardt, Adolphs.