**NEW HUMANITIES COURSES AY 2024 - 2025**

**ENGLISH**

**Hum/En 37. Welcome to Dystopia**. 3-0-6; *first term*. This course surveys a number of literary destinations you would never want to visit in real life: places with near-unsurmountable political and environmental threats where individuality is crushed and where happy endings are hard to come by. Given that life in a dystopia is so awful, what makes this genre of fiction so popular? And what can fictional dystopian societies teach us about our own? We will look for answers to these questions in the work of some of the greatest writers of the past century, including Franz Kafka, Shirley Jackson, Philip K. Dick, Cormac McCarthy, and Ursula K. Le Guin, among others. Instructor: Holland

**En 87. Creative Nonfiction**. 3-0-6; *first term*. This class is a seminar about the reading and writing of creative nonfiction. Contemporary personal essays, profiles of public figures, and other examples of this vibrant form will be read and discussed, as well as the art and craft of writing well. The course covers the essential elements of the genre such as characterization,

dramatization, voice, and the ethics of writing about real life. Each week, we will analyze published nonfiction and practice writing with in-class prompts; out of class, students will complete short exercises for feedback. Near the end of the course, students will turn in one long piece of creative nonfiction (10-15 pages) to showcase what they've learned. Instructor: Lepucki

**En/VC 117. The New York School of Poets.** 3-0-6; *second term*. Starting in the early 1950s, the New York School of poets challenged the stuffy orthodoxy of mid-century American poetry by adopting the experimental tactics of European avant-garde movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism. This course offers a critical exploration of this influential group’s varied body of work, with special attention to its extensive connections to the visual arts. Throughout the course, we will think about the New York School’s activities in the context of Cold War American culture, emergent forms of queer sociality, and the rapidly changing urban environment of postwar Manhattan. Writers and artists covered may include Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, Amiri Baraka, Kenneth Koch, Barbara Guest, James Schuyler, Joe Brainard, Alice Notley, Ted Berrigan, and Eileen Myles. Instructor: Schneiderman

**En/VC 116. Picturing the Universe.** 3-0-6; *second term*. Whether you are a physicist, photographer, or bibliophile, grab a warm jacket. The night sky beckons. In addition to observing and photographing our own starry skies, we will study 19thcentury literary, artistic, and scientific responses to new understandings of the universe as dynamic, decentered, and limitless. In Victorian England, picturing the universe in literature and recording celestial light in photographs defied the physiological limitations of human observation and fueled larger debates about objective evidence and subjective documentation. Prerequisites: students are required to take two Freshman Humanities classes before enrolling in Advanced Humanities. Instructor: Sullivan

**En 180. Special Topics in English: Literatures of Counter-Revolution in the 17th and 18th Centuries.** *3-0-6; first term.* While revolutionary politics abounded in seventeenth-century England, the period also saw the rise of traditions of reaction calling to preserve the status quo against revolutionary ideals. This course will explore how this impulse to conserve, rather than revolutionize, society led to surprising tensions: those defending tradition may express disruptive and agitational rhetoric, while others who advocated for revolution and innovation in the sciences argued against revolutionary politics. How did literature help define and complicate the horizon of counter-revolutionary politics, especially in relation to Britain’s emergent imperial project? Authors may include George Herbert, Aphra Behn, Anne Finch, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift. Instructor: Li

**En 180. Special Topics in English: The Mind of the Modernist Novel.** *3-0-6; first term***.** This course explores the innovations of the modernist novel through its evolving approach to representing characters’ minds. We will consider the impact of the impressionist movement on the psychological novel around the turn of the twentieth century; the development of “stream of consciousness” narration; how writers responded to the newly-circulating ideas of psychoanalysis in their work. Authors may include Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Ford Madox Ford, Elizabeth Bowen, and D.H. Lawrence. Instructor: Mundell-Perkins

**En. 180. Special Topics in English: Autobiography and the Novel.** *3-0-6; second term.*In this course we will think about the playful, and occasionally fraught relationship between fiction and reality traced through novelists’ use of their own life experience in the stories they tell. Does narrative form afford or distort the portrayal of real life? Why is (or isn’t) the novel an appropriate medium for telling a life story? What does the recent rise of “autofiction” as a genre tell us about the place of the novel in our lives today? Our readings will range broadly across the course of the 20th century to the present day. Authors may include James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, V.S. Naipaul, Jeanette Winterson, William Sutcliffe, and Rachel Cusk. Instructor: Mundell-Perkins

**En. 180. Special Topics in English: Introduction to Asian American Literature and Theory.** *3-0-6; third term.* This course will provide an introduction to Asian American literature and theory. We will explore literary productions as a site to interrogate the aspirations and contradictions of the rubric of ‘Asian America’. What does it mean to be Asian American? How can we think about the racial politics of Asian America in relation to class, gender, and other social determinants? Course readings will feature a mix of classic and contemporary Asian American fiction, poetry, and theory. Authors may include Maxine Hong Kingston, Karen Tei Yamashita, Solmaz Sharif, and Franny Choi. Instructor: Li

**En 180. Special Topics in English: Cold War American Modernism.** *3-0-6; Second term.* This course will engage the complexities and contradictions of US Cold War culture with a focus on literary modernism. The 1950s saw the rise of McCarthyism and the threat of nuclear war, as well as landmark events that galvanized the civil rights movement and demands for social justice. We will explore these contexts through readings in Cold War fiction, drama, and poetry that demonstrate how mainstream social identities were being challenged and subverted in ways that would intensify and take on collective expression in the 1960s. Instructor: Sherazi

**HISTORY**

**H 110. Environment and Empire in the Early Modern Atlantic World.** 3-0-6; *first term*. (Advanced hum). According to earth scientists, European colonization of the Americas constituted an ecological disaster of global proportions. The environmental impact of colonization, however, was experienced at every scale as new people, animals, plants, and microbes collided in unprecedented and unanticipated ways. This course will explore all of these scales and introduce students to both the field of environmental history and to the Atlantic World, a term used by scholars to describe interactions between Europeans, Africans, and Americans from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. The major themes of this course will be the exploration and exploitation of the natural world by Europeans, the creation of knowledge about the natural world, the use of environment as a tool of resistance by enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples and changing views of the natural world throughout the early modern period. Instructor: Jones

**HUMANITIES**

**Hum 59. Special Topics in Humanities: Writing the Emotions.** *3-0-6; first term.* How do we express emotion in language? In what ways does emotion shape moral, political, and literary thought? Does emotion have a place in critical writing? In this course, we will be exploring how authors from a range of genres and disciplines have engaged with the emotions, both as an object of study and as an expressive device. We will consider the distinction between written and oral forms of expression, the racial and gendered dynamics in theories of feeling and “affect,” and the arguments for and against using emotion as an ethical guide to live our lives. Authors may include Audre Lorde, Mary Shelley, Søren Kierkegaard, Sigmund Freud, Karl Ove Knausgaard, and Zadie Smith. Instructor: Mundell-Perkins

**Hum 59. Special Topics in Humanities: The Art of Reading.** *3-0-6; third term.*In this course, we will be examining our attachments to the stories we read, both positive (when we are immersed in a narrative, and want to know what happens next) and negative (when we become uncertain or even suspicious about what we read). We will think closely about the different kinds of relationship novels might cultivate with their readers, and to what ends, as well as how the act of reading is represented within literature itself.To what extent can our reading be considered a creative act? Authors may include Daniel Defoe, Roland Barthes, Teju Cole, Don DeLillo, Plato, Elaine Scarry, and Ruth Ozeki." Instructor: Mundell-Perkins

**Hum 59. Introduction to English Renaissance Poetry.** *3-0-6, second term.*This course will provide an introduction to English poetry in the 16th and 17th centuries, with an emphasis on exploring how poems served as vehicles to make sense of the political and social contradictions of early modern England. How do Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare’s sonnets blend themes of unrequited desire with political critique? How does Hester Pulter develop early ideas of physics through her lyrics, like imagining the apocalypse through the dissolution of atoms? Other authors covered in the course may include Katherine Philips, John Donne, Margaret Cavendish, and John Milton. Instructor: Li

**Hum 59. The Early Islamic World (c. 600-1453).** *3-0-6, third term*. In the middle of the seventh century, the tribal followers of a new religion called Islam burst out of the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and rapidly overwhelmed the armies of the ancient Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. By the middle of the next century, they had conquered much of the western Eurasian world, from the Central Asian steppe to the Straits of Gibraltar. The Muslims’ extraordinary achievement bound together lands formerly ruled by two ancient empires—the Roman and Persian—and transformed the cultures, societies, economies, and laws of the diverse peoples now subject to their rule. This course explores the political, social, and institutional history of the Islamicate world from its origins in seventh-century Arabia to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. It will pay particular attention to relations between Islam and the other cultures of the Mediterranean, as they are revealed in episodes such as the conquest of Spain, the Crusades, and repeated conflicts with the Byzantine Empire. It will also explore internal political, cultural, and religious conflict among the followers of Islam themselves. Instructor: Morgan

**MUSIC**

**Mu 150. The Piano in History.** *3-0-6, third term*. Throughout its history, the piano has occupied a somewhat contradictory role as both a complex machine and an expressive musical instrument. Initially developed in response to a musical desire for greater expressive potential in keyboard instruments, the piano has at other times been derided as a merely mechanical vehicle for unmusical displays of virtuosity. This course examines the complicated history of the piano from its invention around 1700 through the late-20th century. We will explore the technological evolution of the instrument itself alongside its changing social roles and seek to understand how these factors influenced the development of piano techniques and repertoire at various points in history. Considering specific works for the piano, individual pianists of the past, and broader cultures of pianism, we will engage with core questions of gender and musicality, virtuosity and musical expression, amateurism and professionalism, and musical composition. This course is suitable for both students who have a musical background and those who do not. Instructor: Ballance

**PHILOSOPHY**

**Pl 89. Applied Ethics (Ethics Bowl).** 3-0-6; *first term.* This course will prepare a team to participate in the regional Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl in November/December. The Ethics Bowl provides students with the opportunity to discuss and work towards solving complex ethical issues in a team setting. The course will be structured around the ∼15 case studies we receive, and consist of learning argumentative tools in moral philosophy, researching and analyzing the case studies, and debate practice in the lead-up to the tournament. During the tournament we will present & defend our analyses and engage with the analyses of other teams. Cases range from various practical contexts, including science & engineering, medicine, education, public policy, and personal life. If successful in the regional competition, our team will be invited to the National competition (Feb-March) which involves a new set of cases. The class will meet once a week (3 hours). Attendance to the tournament is required and travel expenses will be covered. Max enrollment of 10. Pass/fail basis. The course does not satisfy the humanities writing intensive requirement and can only be taken for credit once per student. Instructor: Gurcan

**VISUAL CULTURE**

**VC 73. Seeing Systems: Critical Research as Visual Art.** 3-0-6. *first term*. Since the 1960s, artists have increasingly used visual art to question the very foundation of the world we live in. Through site-specific research and visual projects, this course will teach students how to use the practice of visual art to raise big questions about our world and how its systems (political, economic, technological, etc.) do or do not serve our best interests. Students will be introduced to the work of conceptual artists such as Trevor Paglen, Forensic Architecture, Carolyn Lazard, and Park MacArthur, who examine technological, political and economic themes through research in order to produce meaningful installations. Students will participate in a combination of research, critical thinking, visual art making, group critiques, and visiting exhibitions of contemporary artists working in the field today. Previous art or art history experience is encouraged but not required. Instructor: American Artist

**VC 74. Imaging Ecological Futures: Visual Art and Ecology.** 3-0-6; *third term*.

How can art help visualize a post-carbon future? This class will look at environmental art projects over the past 50 years, from the birth of ecofeminism and anti-nuclear movements to today’s artistic approaches to environmental justice. This class will research and discuss the legacy of eco artists, read seminal works, and engage in class discussions drawn from contemporary writing on the politics of colonial landscapes and queer approaches to ecology. These artworks address issues of sustainability, extraction and marginalization that affect vulnerable human bodies and the non-human world. We will then use ecological and feminist methods to create personal artworks. This class will use the resources of the Huntington Botanical Garden, and potentially field trips for plein air works on major local energy infrastructure sites. Instructor: Segall

**VC 176. Representation Matters?**. 3-0-6; *first term*. Organizations from Google to NASA are recruiting diversity task teams. College DEI initiatives have become a flashpoint in the culture wars. Social media feeds are flooded with clickbait headlines like “13 Queer Superheroes We Need to See” and “Disney’s Ariel is Black and People are MAD!” Everywhere, debates about equity and transformation seem to turn on a single phrase: “Representation matters!” But how does representation matter, why does it matter, and when did it come to matter most? Pushing beyond competing narratives of “wokeness” and “inclusion,” this course thinks through representation as a uniquely visual formula for social change with its own history, assumptions, and limitations. Working at nested scales from national controversies (like an all-female Ghostbusters) to local case studies (like East Hollywood’s Flavors From Afar, with its roster of refugee chefs), students will study efforts to increase visibility and institutionalize diversity across cultural contexts, and explore how communities, in turn, challenge and transform identities prescribed for them. Instructor: Stielau

**VC 177. Other Photographies**. 3-0-6; *third term*. Histories of photography typically begin with the invention of the camera in 19th century France, highlighting the key figures, movements, and themes of a Western art form. At best, the Global South is an addendum to this narrative – a place photography happens to, rather than a site of visual innovation. Taking an alternative approach to the canon, this course centers non-Western image cultures in the history and theorization of the medium, following the camera as it travels from the studios of colonial bureaucrats in Rajasthan through the struggle against South African apartheid to Tunisia’s smartphone revolution. Adopting a global and comparative lens, students will read classic works of photographic theory alongside anticolonial philosophy, fiction, and art manifestos, exploring how a familiar medium has been repeatedly re-imagined and re-invented to suit new contexts and meet new needs. Ultimately, we’ll ask how widening our field of view can expand our understanding of photography, shifting how we read images more broadly. Instructor: Stielau