AS.300 (COMPARATIVE THOUGHT AND LITERATURE)

Courses

AS.300.102. Great Minds. 3 Credits.
This course offers an introductory survey of foundational authors of modern philosophy and moral and political thought whose ideas continue to influence contemporary problems and debates. The course is taught in lectures and seminar discussions. Authors studied include Plato, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Virginia Woolf, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Iris Murdoch, James Baldwin, Cora Diamond, Judith Butler, Kwame A. Appiah and others.

Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.145. Humanities Collaboratory. 3 Credits.
The Humanities Collaboratory is designed for new researchers from across the humanities as they gain the applied skills and experience to conduct their own independent research projects in the humanities. The Humanities Collaboratory model uses a high-tech classroom to allow students and instructors to work, learn, and research together. Three sections of this course will share a core list of materials focused on humanities research techniques, but your primary course materials will be individually selected. Students will have the unique opportunity to participate in a humanities lab section where all three course sections merge for discussion. You will choose your own topic to research with no limits of time period, subject, or genre, and through constant collaborative and independent research, each student will develop the expertise in that topic to both write a research paper and create a final oral presentation.

Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.207. The American Literature of the Movies. 3 Credits.
This course brings the question of film's status as art into historical focus by approaching it through the various forms of writing that cinema inspired. Following a brief historical and philosophical preamble, each of the three sections will present a literary vantage point on the movies: "inside," "outside," and "alongside." The "alongside" section centers on films which incorporated film into an adjacent art form, the "inside" section centers on those within the moviemaking industry who wrote about it in their fiction, and "outside" on those who criticized and theorized it. Films that exemplify the issues at hand will accompany each section. Relevant scholarly and theoretical texts elucidate the topics, texts, and films of concern. Students will have the opportunity to read works by H.D., Hart Crane, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Agee, and other notable writers from the first half of the 20th century.

Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.213. Freud, Marx, HBO: Television in Theory. 3 Credits.
For the past fifty years, scholars and cinephiles have been drawn to psychoanalysis as a tool for understanding the unconscious effects films have on their viewers. However, over the past twenty years, since the dawn of television's Second Golden Age, there has been significantly less psychoanalytic engagement with television as a medium. Marxist theorists and critics, on the other hand, have long been interested in television. But until relatively recently, this was usually to bemoan it as an ideological product of the "culture industry." This course draws on central texts of media studies, as well as key texts in psychoanalytic and Marxist theory, to ask some of the following questions: What is formally unique about the television episode? Are series works of art or commodities, or both? What is Prestige TV, and is it over? What role have streaming services played in the evolution of the medium? What is binge watching, and why do we both love and hate to do it? We will watch episodes of many of the most lauded serial dramas of the past few decades, such as The Sopranos, Twin Peaks, Mad Men, The Wire, Breaking Bad, and Succession, as well as critically acclaimed comedies like The Simpsons, Seinfeld, The Office (UK), and Peep Show. We will read theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Laura Mulvey, Jason Mittell, Mark Fisher, and Todd McGowan.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.227. Business Fictions. 3 Credits.
When you are working for a company, how do you distinguish your ideas, actions, and responsibilities from the firm's— if that is even possible? What is corporate culture or a corporate person, and how is it similar or different from any other kind of culture or person? These and related questions inspired and fascinated writers from the nineteenth century through the present. By reading and thinking about short stories, novels, film, a television series, and a play, we will explore these issues and potential resolutions to them. The course especially considers how problems of action, agency, and responsibility become an intriguing challenge for writers of a variety of modern and contemporary fictions of the business world. Texts will include short stories by Herman Melville, Alice Munro, Ann Petry, and John Cheever; novels by Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Lydia Millet; films, plays, and television by Charlie Chaplin, David Mamet, and Dan Harmon (Community).

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.300. Honors Seminar. 3 Credits.
The Honors Seminar is a mandatory component of the Honors Program in Humanities, which offers qualified undergraduates the possibility of pursuing an independent research project in their Junior and Senior years in any humanistic discipline or combination of disciplines: intellectual history, comparative literature, philosophy, critical theory, psychoanalysis, religion, film, etc., as well as points of intersection between the arts and the sciences. Sophomores who plan to study abroad in their Junior year should also consider applying to the Program. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the Seminar will focus on a close reading of Tolstoy’s The Death of Ivan Ilych and associated texts by Plato, Montaigne, Heidegger, Beauvoir, Levi, Gawande, and others on death and dying.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Projects and Methods (FA6)
AS.300.301. Women and Work in the US. 3 Credits.
This course offers an introduction to the political forces, cultural values, and social factors which have shaped the history of women’s labor in the US. This course will ask questions such as: Why do we place a higher value on work which takes place in the public sphere than work in the home? How do representations of work in literature and popular movies reinforce or subvert gender roles? How have women negotiated gendered and racial boundaries through political action or writing? Focusing on racialized labor, domestic labor, sex work, and factory work, the course will provide an interdisciplinary cultural study of women’s work relevant to our current historical moment. Authors discussed include Saidiya Hartman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emma Goldman, and Kathi Weeks. Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.303. Stories of the Land: Nature and Narratives in Chinese Literature. 3 Credits.
This course surveys modern and contemporary Chinese literature with a focus on the interplay between nature and narratives. We will read fictions by Shen Congwen, Xiao Hong, Alai, and Chi Zijian, among others, to embark on a journey through different forms, ideas, and practices of storytelling with and about nature. As we traverse the landscape of Chinese literature - from West Hunan to occupied Manchuria, from Tibet to Inner Mongolia - we will pay special attention to how local geographies, aesthetics, and epistemes inform these works and help create their literary worlds. Literary texts will be brought into dialogue with ecocritical theories, as we explore storytelling as a world-making practice in which both human and non-human beings take active part. Such a perspective is helpful for reimagining a future that overcomes human exceptionalism and environmental exploitation. All readings will be provided in English translations; knowledge of Chinese is not required. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.305. Japanese Animation: History, Theory, Ecology. 3 Credits.
An in-depth introduction to the history of Japanese animation from its origins in the 1910s to the contemporary post-Studio Ghibli era. In this course, we survey the narratives, aesthetic forms, industrial practices, and multimedia marketing strategies that have helped Japanese animation emerge as a global cultural phenomenon with a transnational fandom. What distinguishes “anime” from other practices of animation, and what forms of animation practice are excluded by animécentric narratives of Japanese animation history? What types of consumer behavior and emergent forms of sociality has anime engendered, and why have they come to occupy a central place in debates about postwar visual culture and Japanese (post)modernity? And how has Japanese animation been continually reshaped through its dynamic engagement with traditional and emerging media? In tackling these questions, our inquiry will be guided by four distinct methodological approaches that are central to studies of animation and new media: film studies, fan and cultural studies, cyborg theory and posthumanism, and media ecology. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.307. The Theory of Everything. 3 Credits.
Most physicists and cosmologists still dream of a final theory for the cosmos, the one-inch mathematical formula that will explain... everything. From atoms to galaxies, from morals to daydreams. Is this possible? Can a single theory account for everything we see? Some physicists, such as Don Lincoln and Steven Weinberg believe so. Others, such as Lisa Randall and Carlo Rovelli are skeptical. In this course we will examine arguments for and against the existence of an all-encompassing theory from the point of view of philosophy and cosmology. We will read from a wide variety of sources, including popular science books, scientific articles, and classical texts in the philosophy of science. We will also trace the intellectual history of the notion of an all-encompassing theory in Western philosophy and in physics. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.311. Introduction to Intellectual History. 3 Credits.
This course offers a conceptual and historical introduction to Intellectual History. What makes the “history of ideas” different from the history of other objects? What, if anything, distinguishes the history of ideas from the history of philosophy? What is it exactly that we call “ideas”? In what sense do they have a history? These are examples of the kind of questions addressed in the course. Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.317. The Russian Novel. 3 Credits.
This course introduces students to the nineteenth century Russian novel and considers its lasting impact on world culture. We will read classic masterpieces of the psychological and philosophical novel, and their experimental forerunners. Short lectures on historical and cultural context and on methods of literary analysis will be combined with intensive group discussion. Novels include Anna Karenina, Crime and Punishment, Eugene Onegin, Dead Souls, and Hero of our Time. Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.322. Lu Xun And His Times: China’s Long 20th Century And Beyond. 3 Credits.
The “founding father of modern Chinese literature,” Lu Xun (1881-1936) saw himself as a contemporary of writers like Gogol, Ibsen, and Nietzsche in creating his seminal short stories and essays, and likewise, he has been seen by numerous Chinese and Sinophone writers as their contemporary since his lifetime until today. In this course, we will survey Lu Xun’s canonical works and their legacies through a comparative approach. What echoes do Lu Xun’s works have with the European and Russian texts he engaged with? Why did his works manage to mark a “new origin” of Chinese literature? How were his works repeated, adapted, and appropriated by Chinese and Sinophone writers from the Republican period through the Maoist era to the post-socialist present, even during the Covid-19 pandemic? Are his times obsolete now that China is on the rise? Or, have his times come yet? We will raise these questions to guide our comparative investigation into Lu Xun’s works and their legacies in China’s long twentieth century and beyond. Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)
AS.300.323. Shakespeare and Ibsen. 3 Credits.
William Shakespeare and Henrik Ibsen are the two most frequently performed playwrights in history, and both have been credited with reinventing drama. Shakespeare for the Elizabethan stage and Ibsen for the modern. In this course we will pair together plays by each author – those that stand in an explicit relation of influence as well as those that share a significant set of concerns – in order to investigate how each takes up and transform key problems in the literary, political, and philosophical tradition for their own historical moment. Plays to be studied: by Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, The Tempest, A Winter's Tale; by Ibsen, St. John's Night, Hedda Gabler, Rosmersholm, The Wild Duck, The Master Builder, When We Dead Awaken.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.325. Origins of Postwar Japanese and Japanophone Literatures. 3 Credits.
A survey of post-WWII literatures written in Japanese and/or by writers of Japanese backgrounds from the perspective of their engagement with the memories of war and imperialism. Reading novels, short stories, essays, and poems produced by representative postwar Japanese writers, zainichi Korean writers, and overseas Japanophone writers, we will discuss how their struggles with the contested, politicized, and/or un-historicized memories of suffering from war and imperialism shapes literary forms. These works will be coupled with critical writings on key concepts such as pain, trauma, victimhood, responsibility, nationalism, diaspora, and gender. Readings in Hayashi Fumiko, Abe Kobo, Mishima Yukio, Oe Kenzaburo, Murakami Haruki, Lee Yangji, Yu Miri, John Okada, and Kazuo Ishiguro, among others. This course also serves as an introduction to postwar Japanese literature and culture. All readings are in English.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.328. Contemporary Sinophone Literature and Film. 3 Credits.
A survey of contemporary literature and film from the peripheries of the Chinese-speaking world, with a special focus on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, the Americas, and Europe. We will not only examine literary and filmic works in the contexts of the layered histories and contested politics of these locations, but will also reexamine, in light of those works, critical concepts in literary and cultural studies including, but not limited to, form, ideology, hegemony, identity, history, agency, translation, and (post)colonialism. All readings are in English; all films subtitled in English.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.330. Modern East Asian Literatures Across Boundaries. 3 Credits.
Modern literature in East Asia is as much defined by creation of national boundaries as by their transgressions, negotiations, and reimaginations. This course examines literature originally written in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in light of contemporary understandings of political, social, and cultural boundary demarcation and crossings. How do experiences of border-crossing create and/or alter literary forms? How, in turn, does literature inscribe, displace, and/or dismantle boundaries? Our readings will include, but not limited to, writings by intra- and trans-regional travelers, exiles, migrants, and settlers; stories from and on contested borderlands and islands (e.g. Manchuria, Okinawa, Jeju); and works and translations by bilingual authors. All readings are provided in English translation.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.332. From Chekhov to Chernobyl: Russian Literature of Environmental Catastrophe. 3 Credits.
Environmental degradation and disaster offer a steady backdrop to the 20th century in Russia and the Soviet Union. While the Soviet regime promised mastery over the environment and Russian culture valorized the harmonization of humans with the natural world, environmental catastrophe proved the folly of those dreams. We will read works by authors who have grappled with this ongoing catastrophe and its implications for relations between human beings and the world. Texts range from short stories and novellas to modernist experimental fiction and documentary prose. We will also engage with materials in special collections and screen selected films. Authors include: Chekhov, Bulgakov, Platonov, Solzhenitsyn, Rasputin, Petrushevskaya, and the Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich.
Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.334. From Catharsis to Pathosformel: Forms of Affect in Art and Life. 3 Credits.
Catharsis, a loaded term since Aristotle, has persevered in various forms to our day. Whatever its definition, catharsis isn’t solipsistic. Its power requires an eccentric stimulus, be it Antigone's tragic fate or a cascade of sounds in a Baroque concerto. The experience of catharsis occasionally occurs in everyday life, where it is dimmed, while in art it is fulgurant. Our course will analyze catharsis in response to literary, visual, and musical representation. We will begin with examples of catharsis in the context of ancient and modern tragedy (Sophocles, Shakespeare, Racine's Phèdre, and Janusz Glowacki's Antigone in New York) as well as comedy (Mikhail Bakhtin, Lev Vygotsky, Jacques Tati), and music (Martha Nussbaum on Mahler). As examples of ironic catharsis, we will read Baudelaire’s prose poems and Stanislaw Lem's Pilot Pirx stories. To understand the ramifications of the term we will look at J. L. Austin's notion of speech-acts (How to Do Things with Words). We will ask if catharsis is attainable through an iconic image (is Christ on the cross a cathartic icon?) What is the relationship between rhythm and catharsis? Finally, we will consider what constitutes anti-catharsis (Kalliopi Nikolopoulou) and when catharsis is absent despite tragedy (Clarice Lispector's The Hour of Life).

Prerequisite(s): Students who have taken AS.001.196 are not eligible to take AS.300.334.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)
AS.300.335. Contemporary Opera and Literature: Identity, Society, Politics. 3 Credits.
Composer Matthew Aucoin has recently called opera “the impossible art.” Its impossibility feels particularly acute today, as it is buffeted by competing media, genres, and attention. Yet since 2000, opera has never seemed as vibrant, with composers new and old continuing to engage with its "generative impossibilities," using a variety of literary genres as their sources. This class considers central opera examples from the past twenty years, looking at compositions by such creators as Thomas Adès, Unsuk Chin, Missy Mazzoli, Terence Blanchard, and György Kurtág, among others. These composers and their performers and critics engage with a variety of literary genres including novels, short stories, memoirs, and plays, as well as different media, chief among them film. They address opera's tangled history and its possible roles in our contemporary world, asking questions about race, class, ideology, the environment, politics, and identity. This class will do the same, asking what opera today is capable of doing that other genres (musical and otherwise) cannot. How can—and does—opera speak to the present moment? The class will spend time developing a theoretical and practical vocabulary for considering both literary texts and how best to listen to, watch, and analyze opera. No musical background is required.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3)

AS.300.336. Forms of Moral Community: The Contemporary World Novel. 3 Credits.
Literary and philosophical imaginations of moral community in the post-WWII period. Texts include: Coetzee, Disgrace; McEwan, Atonement; Achebe, Things Fall Apart; Ishiguro, An Artist of the Floating World; Roy, The God of Small Things; Lessing, The Grass is Singing; Mistry, A Fine Balance; Morrison, Beloved; and essays by Levi, Strawson, Adorno, Murdoch, and Beauvoir on the deep uncertainty over moral community after the crisis of World War II. Close attention to novelistic style and narrative will inform our study of the philosophical questions that animate these works. What does it mean to acknowledge another person’s humanity? Who are the members of a moral community? Why do we hold one another responsible for our actions? How do fundamental moral emotions such as contempt, humiliation, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, and regret reveal the limits of a moral community?
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.337. The Tragic Tradition. 3 Credits.
This course offers a broad survey of tragic drama in the Western tradition, from its origins in ancient Greece to the twentieth century. In lectures and discussion sections, we will study the specific literary features and historical contexts of a range of different works, and trace the continuities and transformations that shape them into a unified tradition. Key questions and themes throughout the semester will include what counts as tragic; the tragedy of social and political conflict, the bearing of tragedy on the meaning and value of life, the antagonistic relation between world and humans, the promises and dangers of tragedy for contemporary culture. Authors to be studied: Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca, Shakespeare, de la Barca, Racine, Goethe, Strindberg, Lorca, and Beckett.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.338. Saharan Imaginations. 3 Credits.
Deserts have always mesmerized and fascinated people from different cultures and backgrounds. These arid lands, which are principally known for the scarcity of water resources, excessive heat, and dusty winds, have attracted romantics, dreamers, mystics, spies, ethnographers, explorers, and fearless adventurers as well as social outcasts and brigands. Students in the course will engage with different literary works that are emplotted in different deserts. Drawing on the tension between Saharanism, which we simply define as a universalizing imaginary of deserts, and ecological care (ecocare), whereby is meant the intimate relationship between people and place, the course will allow students to engage in multifaceted analyses of the representations of the desert in scholarship, literature, and cinema. In addition to subverting all sorts of romantic, colonialist, and adventurist approaches to deserts, the students will emerge from the course understanding that desertic spaces are home to myriad forms of mobility, solidarity, and connectivity. Literature depicts people as they go about their quotidian life, producing artifacts, exchanging material and immaterial goods, and forming relationships, thus debunking Saharanism myths of emptiness, death, and danger that have overtaken the image of deserts in popular imagination. Accordingly, by excluding the false assumption of the desert’s death, the course will allow students to think about the environmental and humanistic ethics of nuclear experiments, policing, and extraction that unfold in deserts across the globe.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Citizens and Society (FA4), Democracy (FA4.1)

AS.300.340. Literature and Film of Unintended Consequences. 3 Credits.
Sometimes brilliant ideas and plans don't work as anticipated, or go very badly—for example, empowering the “invisible hand” of the market, building a huge hydroelectric dam, or plotting a double murder by two strangers. This course explores these and other fascinating literary instances of unintended consequences—the unanticipated results of actions that people planned ending up a very different way. Reading or watching mainly twentieth-century American literature and movies, as well as some essays and poetry, we will follow a range of different creators as they think about unplanned effects and why they matter. What can these works tell us about how we intend, act, or make meaning at the limits of our control? Texts will include films by Charlie Chaplin, Billy Wilder, and Alfred Hitchcock, poetry or fiction by Wallace Stevens, Patricia Highsmith, and Zadie Smith.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Citizens and Society (FA4)
AS.300.341. Transwar Japanese and Japanophone Literatures. 3 Credits.
A survey of Japanese and Japanese-language literatures produced in Japan and its (former) colonies during the "transwar" period, or the several years before and after the end of WWII. This periodization enables us to take into account the shifting boundaries, sovereignties, and identities amid the intensification of Japanese imperialism and in the aftermath of its eventual demise. We aim to pay particular attention to voices marginalized in this political watershed, such as those of Japanese-language writers from colonial Korea and Taiwan, intra-imperial migrants, and radical critics of Japan's "postwar" regime. Underlying our investigation is the question of whether literature can be an agent of justice when politics fails to deliver it. We will introduce secondary readings by Adorno, Arendt, Levinas, Derrida, and Scarry, among others, to help us interrogate this question. All readings are in English.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.343. The Cinema of Revolution. 3 Credits.
This course examines global political revolutions through cinema and the ways in which cinema helped to make political revolutions. Early cinema was intimately intertwined with the Russian revolution, and Russian revolutionary cinema had a profound impact on the ways in which media was used for revolutionary purposes through the 20th century and around the world. Students will be introduced to films from a number of different countries, and the history and context of their production and reception. They will also learn methods of film analysis and produce their own video essay.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.345. Narrative Imagination in Philosophy and Literature. 3 Credits.
We are constantly immersed in narratives or, as Roland Barthes said, narrative "is simply there like life itself... international, transhistorical, transcultural." As a bridge between experience and language, narrative informs the way we understand history, gender, politics, emotion, cognition and much more. Through reading a series of philosophical and literary texts, this course will provide a systematic understanding of how narratives are composed, how they are experienced, and eventually, how they evolve. The first part of this course will focus on building a foundation in the formal study of narrative, focusing on elements such as genre, plot, character, narrator and reader. We will start with a brief consideration of ancient approaches to literary narrative in Aristotle's Poetics and Plato's Republic. From there, we will engage with a wide range of readings in narrative theory. The second part of the course will focus on critical approaches to narrative, such as gender and narrative, social and political critique of narrative, narratives in the age of artificial intelligence, and conclude with the evolving concept of narrative in the Anthropocene.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.348. Modern Drama. 3 Credits.
This course offers a survey of modern drama, from the mid nineteenth century to the present. We will sample a broad range of dramatic styles and movements in order to uncover the variety of ways theatre has made sense of the human experience over the past two hundred years.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.351. The Concept of Time. 3 Credits.
The purpose of this course is to ask the most important questions concerning the concept of time. What is time? Does time exist? Is it a fundamental aspect of the cosmos or just an illusion of human perception? Do different cultures, historical periods, or individuals have unique conceptions of time? Or are there universal aspects of time that transcend our differences? Do animals perceive time or is the perception of time a uniquely human phenomenon? Is time travel possible? The history of philosophy, both Western and Eastern, provides an array of different answers to these and other fundamental questions related to time. Additionally, there is much contemporary research on the concept that is entirely original. In the past four decades, time has been a major interdisciplinary theme, often bringing together humanists and scientists fascinated by its paradoxes. The guiding concern of this course will be to diagnose those aspects of time that are most relevant to us. What can we add to what has been written about time? Does our unique place in time —post COVID-19 pandemic, on the verge of a possible Third World War—prepare us in any specific way to examine the concept? The syllabus for the course will juxtapose canonical philosophical texts by some of the greatest thinkers of time with contemporary writings about time. The readings will support a problem-centered approach, exploring different possibilities for understanding the concept of time and different possible solutions for its many difficulties.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.353. Ibsen, Strindberg, Beckett, Brecht. 3 Credits.
This course examines the revolutions produced by four of the most innovative and influential figures in modern drama: Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Bertolt Brecht, and Samuel Beckett. We will look in detail at specific plays and literary programs in order to trace the transformation drama underwent during this period and to probe the claims and ambitions of modern art.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.355. Literature and the Idea of Nature. 3 Credits.
This course traces the changing idea of nature and our relation to it. We will study this topic through the close attention to a variety of exemplary literary texts from a range of different historical situations. These include drama, poetry, novels, and essays, as well as topics such as renaissance pastoral, the dream of dominating our environment through mechanical reason, the idealization of nature in romantic poetry, and contemporary confrontations with our planet's sixth mass extinction, climate change, and problems of environmental justice. We will read texts by Tasso, Shakespeare, Defoe, Hölderlin, Leopardi, Mary Shelley, Thoreau, Hemingway, Carson, Albee, as well as writings in current ecological humanities.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.357. Who or What Counts as Human?. 3 Credits.
A comparative tour of modern narrative forms from 3 continents. The emphasis is on the development of shorter fictional models, though some of the founders and innovators are better known for their novels. The emphasis will be on the emergence new structural, rhetorical, and thematic concerns, including adaptation to other media. There will be an optional hour for queries and discussion TBA.
AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)
AS.300.372. Children’s Literature and the Self: From Fairy Tales to Science-Fiction. 3 Credits.

It was more or less like this. They said:- You know, Hela, you're an anxious human being. She: - I'm a human being? - Why, of course. You're not a puppy. She pondered. After a long pause, surprised: - I'm a human being. I'm Hela. I'm a girl. I'm Polish. I'm mommy's little daughter, I'm from Warsaw. What a lot of things I am! (Janusz Korczak, Ghetto Diary) This course isn't what you expect. It is not easy. It is not even fun. We will tackle painful topics: orphanhood, loneliness, jealousy, death. You will learn that “Snow White expresses, more perfectly than any other fairy-tale, the idea of melancholy.” (Theodor Adorno) We will also deal with parenthood, childhood, justice, and love. We will not watch any Disney films (but we shall analyze some memes). So who is a child? “Children are not people of tomorrow; they are people today,” wrote in 1919 Janusz Korczak, pediatrician, pedagogue, and children's author who proposed the idea of inalienable Children's Rights. We will read folk tales from different cultures, discuss authorial fairy tales (Oscar Wilde), fantasy books (Tove Jansson’s Moomintrolls) and science-fiction (Stanislaw Lem's Fables for Robots). We will also investigate the special connection between children and animals (Juan Rámon Jimenez, Margaret Wise Brown). Many iconic children's literature characters, such as J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan, “a Betwixt-and-Between” with a Thrush's Nest for a home, St.-Exupéry’s Little Prince, and Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking, are outsiders. All along we will consider how children's literature reflects and shapes ideas of selfhood, from archetypal to post-humanistic ones. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.399. Cinema and Philosophy. 3 Credits.

What do films and philosophy have in common? Do films express, with their own means, philosophical problems that are relevant to our experience of ourselves and the world we live in? This term we will study such issues with a particular focus on questions of justice, truth, revenge, forgiveness, hope, hate, and fear. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.400. Anti-nostalgia in Literature and Film. 3 Credits.

I looked for home elsewhere, and was confident of finding none which I should relish less than the one which I was leaving. Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Caused between Paradise Lost and the Promised Land, between a yearning for utopia and the menace of dystopia, humans seem prone to nostalgia. Originally defined as a disease, nostalgia in literature has functioned both in space and in time. If Romanticism codified certain forms of literary nostalgia, it only follows that anti-nostalgia comes later, maturing in modern exilic and science-fiction works. Both notions lose their raison d'être without the concept of home, be it a place, a temporal home of childhood, or a future home. In the seminar we will analyze modern expressions of anti-nostalgia, from Stendhal's revulsion towards his hometown of Grenoble, through various accounts of precluded return, to a poisoned, mangled return. Disappointment, disillusionment, even horror accompany anti-nostalgia. Shock and trauma pervert a sense of belonging into disgust and fear. While nostalgia is lyrical, anti-nostalgia can be violent and bitter or passive and indifferent. We will study works of prose (Stendhal, Kafka, Bunin, Lem, Lispector, Márai, Bobowski) and poetry (Szymborska, Gryenberg) as well as film (Nadav Lapid, Pawel Lozinski). Our secondary sources will include Jean Starobinski, Vladimir Jankelévitch, Jean Baudrillard, and Jora Vaso. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.401. Comparative Late- and Post-Cold War Cultures in China, the USSR, and Beyond. 3 Credits.

This course invites students to explore culture in the late and post-Cold War world from a broader perspective by surveying literature, thought, cinema, art, and music in Chinese and Soviet societies from the 1980s to the present. How did Chinese and Soviet intellectuals reconfigure, reform, and/or reinvent their cultures as they re-embraced the ideas of freedom, democracy, and globalization? How did they grapple with the legacies of their socialist and even pre-socialist pasts as they entered new eras of reforms? How did reform movements adopt different forms and strategies in different parts of the USSR and in the Sinophone world? What kinds of negotiations took place between various centers and peripheries within and around these regions? What can we learn from their cultural endeavors about the promises, contradictions, and discontents of the post-Cold War world, as we witness the rise of a so-called “new cold war” today? In this co-taught course, specialists in Sinophone and Soviet cultures will guide students to read and discuss representative works from the 1980s onward from a comparative perspective. Readings include Cui Jian, Yu Hua, Can Xue, Mo Yan, Yan Lianke, Guo Songfen, and the film Hibiscus Town, as well as Viktor Tsoi, Komar and Melamid, Aka Morchiladze, Oksana Zabuzhko, Serhiy Zhadan, and the film Repentance. No prerequisites. All course materials will be provided in English translation or with English subtitles. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Citizens and Society (FA4)

AS.300.402. What is a Person? Humans, Corporations, Robots, Trees. 3 Credits.

Knowing who or what counts as a person seems straightforward, until we consider the many kinds of creatures, objects, and artificial beings that have been granted—or demanded or denied—that status. This course explores recent debates on being a person in culture, law, and philosophy. Questions examined will include: Should trees have standing? Can corporations have religious beliefs? Could a robot sign a contract? Materials examined will be wide-ranging, including essays, philosophy, novels, science fiction, television, film. No special background is required. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.300.418. The Modernist Novel: James, Woolf, and Joyce. 3 Credits.

In this course, we will survey the major works of three of the greatest, most relentless innovators of the twentieth century — Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce — who explored and exploded narrative techniques for depicting what Woolf called the “luminous halo” of life. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

Writing Intensive
AS.300.421. Introduction to Concepts and Problems of Modern Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Critical Theory. 3 Credits.
This seminar aims at providing a survey of some fundamental concepts and problems that shape modern and contemporary debates in philosophy, literary studies, and the humanities at large. This term we will study different notions of existence, language, truth, power, otherness, race, gender, and reality. This course serves as the prosemeark in methods and theory for graduate students in Comparative Thought and Literature but is open to students in all departments.
Distribution Area: Humanities
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)
Writing Intensive

AS.300.501. Independent Study. 1 - 3 Credits.
Undergraduate student having directed work with a specific faculty.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration, Online Forms.

AS.300.508. Honors Seminar. 3 Credits.
The Honors Seminar is a mandatory component of the Honors Program in Humanities, which offers qualified undergraduates the possibility of pursuing an independent research project in their Junior and Senior years in any humanistic discipline or combination of disciplines: intellectual history, comparative literature, philosophy, critical theory, psychoanalysis, religion, film, etc., as well as points of intersection between the arts and the sciences. Sophomores who plan to study abroad in their Junior year should also consider applying to the Program. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the Seminar will focus on a close reading of Tolstoy’s The Death of Ivan Ilych and associated texts by Plato, Montaigne, Heidegger, Beauvoir, Levi, Gwande, and others on death and dying.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration, Online Forms.
AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Projects and Methods (FA6)

AS.300.603. Emerson, Baldwin, Cavell and the Unfinished Promise of America: Then and Now. 3 Credits.
At a time when racial, economic, social, cultural, religious, and political divides seem more irreconcilable than ever, the very fabric of democracy shows its vulnerability in the United States as well as at the global scale. This seminar aims to study how different thinkers, in different historical periods, addressed the challenges, betrayals, and fragile hope of the American Dream and how their voices resonate with contemporary authors and problems inside and outside the United States.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.604. Cicero and Deleuze. 3 Credits.
A comparative study of the philosophy, rhetoric, and naturalism of Marcus Tullius Cicero (Rome, 106–43 BCE) and Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995). Texts include Cicero’s On Fate and On Divination and Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus. The seminar will explore themes pertaining to the environmental humanities and eco-criticism, semiotics, materialism, stoicism, and the practice of cross- and trans-historical comparison and invention.

AS.300.605. Late Heidegger. 3 Credits.
This course will consist of a close reading of the eleven texts collected in Heidegger’s 1954 volume “Vorträge und Aufsätze,” including such seminal pieces as “The Question Concerning Technology,” “What is Called Thinking?” “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” “…poetically man dwells…” and “Aletheia.” Discussions in English; reading knowledge of German required.

AS.300.611. Schopenhauer’s ‘The World as Will and Representation’. 3 Credits.
A close reading of Schopenhauer’s magnum opus, one of the most influential works of philosophy in 19th- and 20th-century literature and art.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.613. Modern Drama. 3 Credits.
This course offers a survey of modern drama, from the mid nineteenth century to the present. We will sample a broad range of dramatic styles and movements in order to uncover the variety of ways theatre has made sense of the human experience over the past two hundred years.

AS.300.617. Philosophy and Literature in Either/Or. 3 Credits.
Celebrated and reviled alike, Kierkegaard’s 1843 Either/Or has been viewed as both the culmination of the Enlightenment project and the birth of existentialism, a playfull work of romantic literature and a piece of late-Hegelian philosophy, a vindication of the secular everyday and the articulation of a modern faith in a transcendent God. In this course we read the work closely and in its entirety and pay particular attention to the relationship between its philosophical arguments and literary forms of presentation.

AS.300.618. What is a Person? Humans, Corporations, Robots, Trees.. 3 Credits.
Knowing who or what counts as a person seems straightforward, until we consider the many kinds of creatures, objects, and artificial beings that have been—demanded or denied—that status. This course explores recent debates on being a person in culture, law, and philosophy. Questions examined will include: Should trees have standing? Can corporations have religious beliefs? Could a robot sign a contract?
Materials examined will be wide-ranging, including essays, philosophy, novels, science fiction, television, film. No special background is required.
Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.622. The Concept of World: From Descartes to the Apocalypse. 3 Credits.
In this course we will examine the ideas of the world as it operates in a range of different literary, philosophical, and theoretical contexts. Beginning with the birth of the modern world in texts like Camoës’s “The Lusisads,” Descartes’s “Le Monde,” and More’s “Utopia,” we will pursue its evolution through Baumgarten’s invention of aesthetics, Kant’s critique of dialectical reason, Husserl’s phenomenology, and Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, to the rise of world literature and the study of indigenous cosmologies in contemporary anthropology. We conclude with reflections on the end of our world in the Anthropocene and its implication for the humanistic disciplines. This course serves as the proseminar in methods and theory for graduate students in Comparative Thought and Literature but is open to students in all departments.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.623. Modern American Poetry: Engaging Forms. 3 Credits.
A dive into the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, Muriel Rukeyser, and Langston Hughes (among a few others), exploring American modernism’s aesthetic and philosophical preoccupations. How do these texts’ formal ambitions engage with philosophical thinking as well as social concerns and political theorizing?
Writing assignments: two short presentation papers and either two 10-12 pages papers or one, multi-drafted, 20-25-page seminar paper.
AS.300.624. Logics of Recognition. 3 Credits.
Since the publication of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, the struggle of consciousness for recognition has played an important role in moral and political philosophy. This seminar aims at studying Hegel's account of subjectivity and its antagonistic encounter with the other as well as the responses and critiques it has elicited in contemporary philosophy. Readings include Foucault, Butler, Derrida, Lévinas, Cavell, Honneth and others. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.628. Introduction to Concepts and Problems of Modern Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Critical Theory. 3 Credits.
This seminar aims at providing a survey of some fundamental concepts and problems that shape modern and contemporary debates in philosophy, literary studies, and the humanities at large. This term we will study different notions of existence, language, truth, power, otherness, race, gender, and reality. This course serves as the prosemair in methods and theory for graduate students in Comparative Thought and Literature but is open to students in all departments.

AS.300.629. Theory, Now and Then: Autonomy, Form, Critique. 3 Credits.
This course explores recent developments and disputes in critical theory in relation to their longer philosophical genealogies. The three topics—form, autonomy, and critique—have been the subject of much recent debate, contention, and new analysis, yet each was also a source of critical and philosophical interest in years past. Our aim will be to make sense of today’s interventions in conversation with earlier theory. “Historical” theory writing will include Adorno, Lukács, Cavell, and Jameson; contemporary theory will include Nicholas Brown, Rita Felski, Caroline Levine, Mark McGurl, and Toril Moi. Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.631. On Literature and Ethics. 3 Credits.
Arguments for the immorality of literature, the morality of literature, and the amorality of literature. Can a literary text be evaluated on ethical grounds, and how? How do literary texts make ethical arguments? What does it mean to read literary texts or do literary criticism in an ethical mode? We will be concerned throughout with the philosophical uses, and abuses, of literary forms. Writing Intensive

AS.300.633. On Literature and Ethics. 3 Credits.

AS.300.634. Contemporary Opera and Literature: Identity, Society, Politics. 3 Credits.
Composer Matthew Aucoin has recently called opera “the impossible art.” Its impossibility feels particularly acute today, as it is buffeted by competing media, genres, and attention. Yet since 2000, opera has never seemed as vibrant, with composers new and old continuing to engage with its “generative impossibilities,” using a variety of literary genres as their sources. This class considers central opera examples from the past twenty years, looking at compositions by such creators as Thomas Adès, Unsuk Chin, Missy Mazzoli, Terence Blanchard, and György Kurtág, among others. These composers and their performers and critics engage with a variety of literary genres including novels, short stories, memoirs, and plays, as well as different media, chief among them film. They address opera’s tangled history and its possible roles in our contemporary world, asking questions about race, class, ideology, the environment, politics, and identity. This class will do the same, asking what opera today is capable of doing that other genres (musical and otherwise) cannot. How can—and does—opera speak to the present moment? The class will spend time developing a theoretical and practical vocabulary for considering both literary texts and how best to listen to, watch, and analyze opera. No musical background is required.

AS.300.635. Foucault’s Late Seminars: the Courage of Truth and the Care of the Self. 3 Credits.
In his latest seminars Foucault shifts his attention from power relations and historical scientific paradigms to the study of the history and philosophical, ethical, and political implications of the knowledge and care of the self as well as its relation to truth. In our current context, where speaking of a supposed “post-truth” epoch is commonplace, the analysis of the later works of Foucault provides precious insights in the nature of subjectivity, social and power relations, and the enduring significance of the search for truth regardless of any particular epistemological attempt to define what ‘truth really is.’

AS.300.636. Forms of Moral Community: The Contemporary World Novel. 3 Credits.
Literary and philosophical imaginations of moral community in the post-WWII period. Texts include: Coetzee, Disgrace; McEwan, Atonement; Achebe, Things Fall Apart; Ishiguro, An Artist of the Floating World; Roy, The God of Small Things; Lessing, The Grass is Singing; Mistry, A Fine Balance; Morrison, Beloved; and essays by Levi, Strawson, Adorno, Murdoch, and Beauvoir on the deep uncertainty over moral community after the crisis of World War II. Close attention to novelistic style and narrative will inform our study of the philosophical questions that animate these works. What does it mean to acknowledge another person’s humanity? Who are the members of a moral community? Why do we hold one another responsible for our actions? How do fundamental moral emotions such as contempt, humiliation, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, and regret reveal the limits of a moral community?
AS.300.647. Comparative Methods and Theory: Formalism and Materialism (Graduate Pro-Seminar). 3 Credits.
This pro-seminar provides a brief overview and map of the theoretical and philosophical positions in the major debate, still ongoing, between formalism and materialism. Its aim is both theoretical and historical: to help graduate students understand the range and depth of these positions as well as their development over time, continuing to this day. We will study fundamental philosophical works (Kant, Hegel, Marx, de Beauvoir), classic theoretical texts (Propp, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu), and contemporary variations on these debates (Fish, McGurl, Moi, Pippin), to name a few. The course fulfills the pro-seminar requirements in comparative methods and theory for CTL but is open to all graduate students.
Distribution Area: Humanities

AS.300.802. Independent Study Field Exam. 3 - 9 Credits.
Graduate student having directed work with a specific faculty.

AS.300.803. Dissertation Research. 10 - 20 Credits.
Dissertation research and discussion of progress. Limited to students writing dissertations.

AS.300.804. Dissertation Research. 10 - 20 Credits.

AS.300.805. Literary Pedagogy. 3 - 9 Credits.
Teaching Assistant graduate student

AS.300.811. Independent Study. 3 - 9 Credits.
Independent Study for graduate level Comparative Thought and Literature students.
Distribution Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.300.812. Graduate Research. 3 - 9 Credits.
Graduate Research

AS.300.813. Teaching Assistantship. 3 Credits.
Teaching assistants are required to register for this course. See handbook for details.

AS.300.891. Summer Research. 9 Credits.
Summer Research