PY.260 (HUMANITIES - LIBERAL ARTS)

Courses

PY.260.021. ESL Writing Intensive 1. 3 Credits.
A year-long course designed for international students who are new to writing in English. Course objectives: teaching students the elements of formal writing, including spelling, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and the elements of thesis, evidence, and conclusion.

PY.260.022. ESL Writing Intensive 2. 3 Credits.
A year-long course designed for international students new to writing in English. The course introduces foundational writing practices and teaches formal writing skills. Course objectives: teaching students the elements of formal writing, including spelling, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and the elements of thesis, evidence, and conclusion.

Prerequisite(s): PY.260.021[C]

PY.260.023. Critical Writing Intensive 1. 3 Credits.
A year-long course to prepare students for college-level writing. This course introduces students to foundational academic writing skills in summary, citation, use of evidence, analysis, and argument. Assignments focus on sentence- and paragraph-level coherence, while reinforcing the conventions of standard American English in academic settings.

PY.260.024. Critical Writing Intensive 2. 3 Credits.
A year-long course to prepare students for college-level writing. This course introduces students to foundational academic writing skills in summary, citation, use of evidence, analysis, and argument. Assignments focus on sentence- and paragraph-level coherence, while reinforcing the conventions of standard American English in academic settings.

Prerequisite(s): PY.260.023[C]

PY.260.115. Core 1. 3 Credits.
Introduction to the practice of analytical thinking and writing in the context of reading foundational historical, philosophical, and/or literary texts. Course objectives: ensuring competence in writing and critical analysis. Students will write four analytical papers (3-4 pages each). Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.216. Core 2. 3 Credits.
Introduction to the basics of writing a research paper. Course objectives: ensuring competence in academic research and writing. Students will select a research topic, find source materials, and complete a formal academic research paper (10-15 pages), with appropriate references properly documented. Prerequisite: Core 1 or approved placement.

Prerequisite(s): PY.260.115[C]

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.241. Art History: European Art Survey, Renaissance - 1855. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the history of art. Open to undergraduates only. Art History 1 surveys European art from the 14th through the mid-19th centuries. It surveys Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architecture in Italy and Northern Europe, its origins in Medieval art, and examines shifts in artistic concepts and forms from the 16th through the mid-18th centuries that led to the emergence of Mannerist, Baroque, and Rococo art. The course concludes with an examination of Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and Realism up through the mid-19th century. Artistic movements, styles and influences relevant to the development of western art will be covered, with the inclusion of some American art traditions as time permits. Additional commentary as it relates to music history will be interwoven.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.252. Art History: Modernism. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the history of art. Open to undergraduates only. This course offers a survey of avant-garde European and American art from the mid-19th century to the present. Some of the many artistic movements covered include Realism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, German Expressionism, Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, De Stijl, early American Modernism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and Postmodernism. Additional commentary as it relates to music history will be interwoven.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.261. Introduction to Psychology. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the fields and research methods of contemporary psychology, including such topics as biological and social bases of behavior, human development, perception, memory, learning theory, intelligence, and abnormal behavior. Special emphasis will be placed on subjects of importance to music education. Open to undergraduates only.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.301. Why Study the Liberal Arts?. 3 Credits.
This course has no specific content, no given topics. It doesn’t try to teach you about a particular subject, time period, or place. No. You the student provide the content. Your work is the focus of this class. Whether you are a dancer, an instrumentalist, a singer, a conductor, a composer, a new media artist, or a recording engineer you will provide the content. We will take what you are doing in your major and look at it from the perspective of the Liberal Arts. You will each have the chance to introduce to your classmates and to write about at least one thing you are interested in—like a particular piece, a technique, an artist, a concept, or a genre. And your classmates will listen to you, read about your interests, and discuss these things as they would a topic in any other Liberal Arts class. You will not only try to express yourselves about your work, but to understand others and their work. You will practice speaking as well as listening, writing as well as reading. And through this communication we will try to build community. For the Liberal Arts are not just a collection of subjects to be learned (and too often forgotten). They are aptitudes and attitudes, ways to build bridges between our islands of experience.

Distribution Area: P, Y
PY.260.313. Katharine the Great: An Everlasting Film Star. 3 Credits.
How does an artist endure? What makes one star last while another fizzles? Katharine Hepburn, 1907-2003, is ranked by the American Film Institute (AFI) as the “greatest female star in the history of American cinema.” She lived as originally as so many of the film heroines she portrayed. This humanities seminar examines the roles and movies that defined the pioneering Hepburn as an actress, a businesswoman, and progressive thinker in American history. Along the way, we will trace pivotal events and cinematic trends in the 20th century contributing to Hepburn’s legacy.
Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.315. Evil in Philosophy, Film, & Literature. 3 Credits.
What is “evil”? How is it depicted in the arts? –In order to address these questions, our two main readings this semester will be Goethe’s drama Faust and Bulgakov’s novel The Master and Margarita. While Goethe’s work is a tragedy, Bulgakov’s novel is a satirical dark comedy. We will pair these readings with selected philosophical essays depicting, for example, Kant’s theory of “radical evil”, and movies, such as “Hannah Arendt”. The discussion topics in this class will be challenging for their intellectual depth, but at the same time incredible fun and entertaining.
Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.330. Asian Representation in Film and TV. 3 Credits.
Depictions of East Asian and Asian-American characters in film and television have evolved since the earliest days of Hollywood. Alongside world events and US immigration patterns, representation shifted and a host of stereotypes emerged. Consider the wise guru, the exotic girlfriend, and the martial arts sidekick among many portrayals. This liberal arts seminar offers historical context and critical tools for analyzing and discussing these representations while gaining acquaintance with a range of films and television series.
Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.335. Existentialism. 3 Credits.
Through readings, discussions, and critical analysis, students will explore existentialist perspectives on freedom, choice, authenticity, and the search for meaning in life. The course will consider existentialist literature, art, and film to contextualize philosophical concepts within broader cultural and historical contexts. Existentialist authors that will be discussed include: Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Buber, Musil, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Kundera. We will try to understand what the existentialist angle on life is, and whether it is applicable to the 21st Century. Unlike traditional approaches to philosophy, the thinkers discussed in this class do not attempt to provide final answers to a traditional set of questions, such as “What is human nature?” “What is the meaning of life?” “What is truth?” Rather, philosophical inquiry emerges within the context of specific practical concerns of human beings, who live in a finite world with no objective standards as guidance. There is a sense of predicament, alienation, estrangement, radical freedom, and responsibility common to these thinkers. What do these characteristics of human life imply for how we (should) relate to ourselves, others, and the world? What kind of society should we build? How can we find consolation and meaning in life? Despite significant differences, all authors discussed in this class do what all good philosophy does: they make you think and ask questions. Upon completion of this class, you will be able to: -Understand the historical development and key concepts of existentialist philosophy. -Analyze existentialist texts and critically engage with primary sources. -Explore existentialist themes such as freedom, choice, alienation, authenticity, and the absurd. -Examine existentialist perspectives on ethics, morality, and the nature of existence. -Apply existentialist insights to contemporary issues and personal experiences. The culmination of this class will be topics selected by students as part of an engaging group work assignment.
Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.337. Philosophy of Art. 3 Credits.
This "Philosophy of Art" course offers a deep dive into the intertwined evolution of philosophy and art as vehicles for revealing truth. Spanning from Ancient Greek Philosophy to the complexities of modern aesthetic theories, this exploration delves into fundamental questions that have shaped our understanding of art and its significance. Topics include the existence of an objective standard for aesthetic taste, the dichotomy between high and low art, the nature of genius, and the relationships between art and pleasure, emotion, and understanding, while also considering the multifaceted role of the artist within our society. What makes something aesthetically pleasing? What is Kitsch? How do we perceive and experience beauty and the sublime? What role does art play in our lives and society? How do different forms of art (visual arts, literature, music, dance, etc.) evoke aesthetic experiences? What does neuroscience have to say about the experience of art? By asking these questions, we are trying to understand the underlying principles and concepts that govern our judgments of beauty and our interactions with artistic objects and experiences. The course will examine art's diverse functions, ranging from its therapeutic potential to its political implications, from the challenges of censorship to the celebration of art for art's sake. Drawing from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wagner, students will engage in critical discourse to uncover the philosophical underpinnings of artistic expression. An integral component of this course is the opportunity for students to pursue independent exploration. Each student will have the chance to delve into a topic of their choice, whether it be presenting on a musical composition, an artist's biography, analyzing the work of a jazz musician, dissecting a choreography, exploring the artistry of a dancer, or examining the significance of a movie score.
Distribution Area: P, Y
PY.260.338. Ethics and the Modern World. 3 Credits.

This is a course that will engage you in several of the most interesting ethical issues and concerns of our time. “Practical Ethics” also goes by the name of “Applied Ethics.” Under “ethics” we consider the rational and critical bases of moral problems and issues. What sorts of things can we be morally responsible for? What is the good life? What makes an action moral or not? In applied ethics we apply these moral questions that arise from philosophical reflection to particular cases and situations of moral conflict. Thus, a course in applied ethics is case-oriented. The subjects studied in applied ethics are many, more than we can cover. Our main emphasis will be on and we can only cover a few of them including: human rights and problems of freedom and equality, poverty and economic justice, the ethics of the environment, and the right to life and death. Our course will proceed largely as a theme-based course. We will first study some of the basic ethical theories to familiarize ourselves with them, like utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics. Then we will address various issues that contain ethical problems in which the solution is not clear. This, we shall see, is often the case. In life, we are confronted with moral dilemmas where the clear choice between right and wrong is not present. That means that a deeper analysis of moral principles behind our choices are necessary. Our class will engage in these conflicts of choice, examining them carefully, engaging very often in in-class discussion and debate.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.344. Opera: Research as Rehearsal. 3 Credits.

Interesting opera is created not just by memorizing a score and mindlessly practicing and repeating it. Thoughtful research is also a form of rehearsal. Performance can be enhanced and understanding deepened by studying an opera’s literary sources, mining its historical context, viewing related artworks, and studying its production history. In other words, doing the work of a dramaturge. Every semester in which it is offered, “Research as Rehearsal” will take as its subject an opera currently being rehearsed by the Peabody Opera Theatre Program. This year we will focus on Handel’s Semele, scheduled for performance in March. We will read such texts as Ovid’s Metamorphoses (a literary source for the opera) and excerpts from Euripides’ Bacchae (since Semele is the mother of Dionysus). We will study paintings like Gustav Moreau’s Jupiter et Sémélé and Peter Paul Rubens’ Death of Semele. Since the performance will be staged in a 1920s style, we will read F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Great Gatsby and watch film versions of the novel. We will also investigate the ways in which this opera’s origins in a pagan Greek myth affected its first London reception during the period of Lent and how that in turn affected future rewrites of the opera. Open to Graduates and Undergraduates.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.350. Introduction to Sociology. 3 Credits.

This course is an introduction to sociology and social problems as a way of understanding the world. Sociology is a field of study that explains social, political, and economic phenomena in terms of social structures, social forces, and group relations. The course will introduce students to the problems that exist within the world and the relationship between individuals and society, which includes focusing on socialization, culture, the social construction of knowledge, inequality, race and ethnic relations, poverty, and political sociology. As a social science, sociology offers an objective and systematic approach to understanding the causes of social problems.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.360. Core 4. 3 Credits.

Sustained consideration of the role of art (music, literature, fine arts, film) in all aspects of society, focusing on particular periods in history or under particular regimes and political structures. Course objectives: ensuring that students have the opportunity to think historically about the role of art and culture in political society and about the economic and cultural systems supporting the creation of art (e.g. patronage, guilds). Students will be required to write one historical “review” of a work of art in historical context (2-3 pages) and one historical research paper (6-8 pages minimum). Students must earn a C+ or better to pass the course.

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core 2 required, PY.260.216[C]

Distribution Area: P Y

PY.260.361. Bodies in Society. 3 Credits.

We’re taught to understand our bodies as natural. Everyone has one. They are universal objects, consistent across humanity. But, people around the world have differing conceptions of what bodies are, what they can do, and where they begin and end. Moreover, people’s experiences of their bodies are highly variant. Even at Peabody, for example, what lips do are very different if you are a dancer, a singer, a horn player, or a flautist. The class is designed to give students new ways of approaching their crafts by introducing them to multiple perspectives on how bodies do things in the world.

Distribution Area: P Y

PY.260.381. Social Media. 3 Credits.

This course delves into the dynamic world of social media, exploring its evolution, societal implications, and economic opportunities. Students will embark on a comprehensive journey through the history of social media platforms, tracing their development from rudimentary networking sites to sophisticated digital ecosystems. The course will critically analyze the multifaceted impact of social media on society, including its influence on communication patterns, social relationships, cultural norms, and democratic processes. Through case studies, discussions, and research projects, students will explore the various ways in which social media shapes individuals’ identities, perceptions, and behaviors.

Distribution Area: P, Y

PY.260.411. The Libretto. 3 Credits.

This class looks at the history, theory, and practice of opera’s most overlooked and ridiculed element: the libretto, Italian for “little book.” Following the fortunes of the libretto from its origins to the present, we’ll see how different ideas about librettos influenced the evolution of opera. During our discussions, we’ll entertain theories about what makes a good libretto. For example, the theory that librettos can be like ugly frogs that the “kiss” of music turn into princely operas. Or that the duty of the librettist is to strip their literary source of all that makes it beautiful, so that the composer can fill all of that back in with music. Librettos come from many sources: dramas, novels, poems, historical events, and original ideas. We’ll ask how the libretto’s origins affect how it gets written. At the level of the sung word, we’ll listen to what happens when you translate a libretto from another language and how “singability” influences word choice. Finally, we’ll also apply this knowledge to writing our own librettos.

Distribution Area: P, Y
PY.260.835. The Art and Architecture of Peabody. 3 Credits.
How often do you visit the George Peabody Library to find a quiet and inspiring place to work? Do you ever walk up the spiral staircase (designed by the same architect who designed the library) or just take the elevator? Are you aware that Peabody has a plaster copy of the Parthenon frieze, one of the most important artworks of Ancient Greece? Or what about the bronze cast of Lorenzo Ghiberti’s “Gates of Paradise,” a masterpiece of the early Renaissance? Did you know George Peabody conceived of the Peabody Institute as a home not only for a music conservatory but also, among other things, a public library and an art gallery? Though much of the art has disappeared, certain celebrated pieces remain, along with the library and the staircase. This class will take you around Peabody to look at these various works, as well as some of the architecture. We will study, for example, the Parthenon frieze, the “Gates of Paradise,” the George Peabody Library, and the Peabody Institute Spiral Staircase. We will interpret these works informed by historical context and theoretical support. But we will also simply read them closely, informed only by what we can see when we slow down and allow ourselves to feel a little appreciation and awe.
Distribution Area: P, Y