

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES THE COOPER UNION

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS SPRING 2026

Core Curriculum

HSS-2 – Texts and Contexts: Old Worlds and New

A study of texts and topics from 1500 to 1800. Sections read common texts and some selections by individual instructors, with emphasis on literary expression and cultural context. Requirements include written analysis and class discussion.

3 credits. Instructor Varies.

HSS-4-A & B – Poverty and Inequality in the US

The aim of this course is to examine the nature, causes, and consequences of poverty and economic inequality in the U.S. We will start by understanding how poverty and inequality are defined and measured, and what problems are associated with these measures. Next, we will try to understand the causes of poverty and inequality (demographic factors, education attainment, discrimination, technology). We will also study mechanisms in place to address the problems of poverty and inequality. The course does not have strict pre-requisites, but familiarity with statistics and/or econometrics will be extremely helpful in understanding the readings.

3 credits. Loujaina Abdelwahed.

HSS-4-C & D– Gender Geographies

This course explores the modern category of gender and the ways that gendered systems of power shape everything from global geopolitics to the intimate spaces of our homes. We will focus on the spatial or geographical aspects of gender, thinking about how particular spaces—such as cities, workplaces, and borderlands—come to be gendered, and how these gendered places shape the people who inhabit them. Alongside geographical concepts, we will engage different theoretical approaches to discuss how gendered power structures have been co-produced with historical processes (including colonial encounters, scientific inquiries, and systems of labor) and how they continue to shape our daily lives. We will also explore how gender intersects with other axes of difference -- including but not limited to race, religion, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Finally, students will practice qualitative research methods—including fieldwork observations and interviews—to analyze gendered power relations in NYC.

3 credits. Nina Ebner.

HSS-4-E & F – Cold War Histories

Was the Cold War the same in Cuba as it was in Korea? Was it the same in Algeria as it was in Vietnam? This seminar looks beyond the narrative of the Cold War as a superpower struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States to explore multiple iterations and temporalities of the conflict. By analyzing key geopolitical developments alongside cultural artifacts of the era (including films, political posters, and photographs), we will interrogate whether it is possible to conceive of just one “Cold War”. We will also examine Cold War legacies

by tracing varied invocations of the era since 1989. Along the way, exposure to skills in archival science will raise awareness about how historical documents are described and preserved. In addition to producing a well-researched and argument-driven writing assignment, we will develop and disseminate creative projects that respond to our historical inquiry in real time.

3 credits. Eilin Pérez.

HSS-4-G & H – Contemporary Cultural Studies

After the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded in 1964, cultural studies became the analysis of the conditions in which socio-cultural formations emerge, are transmitted, translated, and evolve instead of reports wagering on the output of these processes. Founded by Stuart Hall alongside work on socio-genesis by Sylvia Wynter, CCCS principles -- that race is how class is lived, gender how race is lived -- were an extension of W.E.B. DuBois' sociological program. We will explore how culture is an infrastructure of norms and institutions and study counter-cultural experiments from the 20th century onward. Our class will be divided into a seminar and a lab. Students will research a socio-cultural or political movement of their choosing and conduct experiments with practitioners across multiple fields during lab sessions.

3 credits. Victor Peterson II.

HSS-4-I & J – Object Lessons

This course draws on Johann Pestalozzi's 19th-century concept of the "Object Lesson," which emphasized research and learning through sensory experience and observation. Using material history as its core research method, the course asks students to select a personally meaningful yet mass-produced object from after 1950 to study throughout the semester. Through sustained observation, documentation, and historical research into the object's design, manufacture, and social circulation, students will examine how material artifacts reflect broader historical events and movements in society and culture. The course will culminate in a portfolio of interrelated essays that will be paired with other forms of representation to together form a composite historical interpretation and representation of the chosen object.

3 credits. Ninad Pandit.

HSS-4-K – Imagining the Body

This course explores how cultural practices conceptually construct the body in order to perform and sustain their specific functions. Rather than treating the body as a static entity, we will investigate how it is imagined within different frameworks, for example as an object of control, a site of power, or a vessel of meaning. How do these cultural practices shape our understanding of the body's capabilities, limitations, and roles in society? What does it mean for the body to be disciplined, aestheticized, or mobilized for certain tasks? Through these questions, we will uncover how "imagining the body" reveals underlying cultural ideologies and assumptions, and how these constructions affect both individual identities and collective experiences. Dance Studies and Performance Studies will serve as our main lenses for examining how the body moves in relation to both personal agency and cultural forces. Drawing on a range of theorists and looking at a variety of physical practices — from dance to basketball to martial arts to medicine to bodybuilding — we will study where the body becomes a vehicle for dominant ideologies, where it might hold the potential for resistance and transformation, and where it offers opportunities beyond our expectations. Through the course, students will develop a critical understanding of the body as a conceptual space where culture is enacted, contested, and redefined.

3 credits. Buck Wanner.

HSS-4-L – Capitalism, Socialism and/vs Democracy: China's Economic Miracle

In the preface to *Capital* (1867), Karl Marx proposed to '...lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society', which led him to eventually conclude that capitalism is inherently unstable, crisis prone and self-destructive. Writing in 1942 (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*), Joseph Schumpeter famously quipped, in response to his own question: "Can capitalism survive?" His answer: "No, I do not think it can." And yet, capital continues to dominate the globe, evolving and mutating over historical time and national space. After looking at the nature and logic of capital through the lens of these classic texts, this course will be primarily concerned with the following questions: How did the People's Republic of China, following the death of Mao Zedong, navigate this global terrain to emerge as a global economic power? Is China's economic rise sustainable? Will China be overwhelmed by its economic, social and ecological contradictions? What are the implications of the rise of China for the rest of the world and for the global system as a whole?

3 credits. John Sarich.

HSS-4-M – Rock n Roll in the Global Sixties

Rock'n'Roll is a contested terrain. At face value, it is a genre of music with influences on fashion, visual culture, lifestyles, and attitudes of youth since the 1950s. As a pop-cultural phenomenon with unprecedented global reach, however, Rock'n'Roll prompted controversial responses, hailed for its potential to foster dissidence while also critiqued as the epitome of mass consumerism and standardized "formula" cultural production. Using Rock'n'Roll as our conceptual locus, in this course, we will explore interconnected concepts that continue to influence our world today: popular culture, mass media, consumption, consumerism, "youth dissent," counterculture, transnationalism, and globalization. We will read into the multilayered history of Rock'n'Roll and its capacity to influence cultural, social and political attitudes and ways of being in the world. Beyond Western metropolises, we will explore the global aspects of this phenomenon. How did Rock'n'Roll figure in different spaces, places, and times? How do we read diverse aesthetics as part of a common historical moment away from the binaries of local/global, imported/domestic, modern/traditional cultures? Negotiating the liminal spaces between reality and representation, we examine artistic products in their capacity as archival sources, the necessary implement for historical writing, and their potential to inform alternative modes of reading into the past.

3 credits. Mohamad Hodeib.

HSS-4-N – What is a Body?

Each of us inhabits a body, but what is shared about this experience and how do we go about sharing it? Your body may feel like it is something singular, and yet it is entirely dependent upon other materials and other beings to survive. The body as a source of meaning also rests at this same intersection: its meanings are collectively generated and expressed, but what we feel with the body is how it mediates large formations like capitalism or colonialism as intimate, personal experiences. The body is the source of perception—of sensory knowledge, the locus of desire, of pleasure, of pain, and the platform of animation, of life. And of course it is a site of vulnerability, a means of labor, and a unit of biopolitics. So what is a body? In this course, we will let this question lead us to consider the body as a complex site for negotiating and practicing shared experiences using a number of approaches, disciplines, and analytics.

3 credits. E Barnick.

Humanities & Social Sciences Electives

HUM-308 – Creative Writing

In this course, students will read a variety of experimental fiction and nonfiction in order to draw stylistic elements

that they will include in their own writing. Additionally, students will complete a diverse range of creative writing exercises, which may lead to longer works that they have workshopped by the class. Students will leave the course with a portfolio of their own experimental writing and a deeper understanding of the relationship between form and function in literature.

3 credits. Theresa Lin.

HUM-315 – Science and Contemporary Thought

This course approaches science not as a timeless pillar of “contemporary thought,” but as a set of practices shaped by the societies, materials, and worldviews that produced them. What we treat as modern scientific reasoning—its authority, its methods, its claims to neutrality—emerges from older traditions of making, measuring, and interpreting that stretch across cultures and centuries. By tracing these genealogies, we unsettle the very category of “the contemporary” and show how the past continues to guide how we build, design, and imagine scientific knowledge today. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS), we examine how scientific ideas gain legitimacy and how technologies emerge from the social. Case studies move from ancient technical recipes to early modern experiments to current debates around artificial intelligence—juxtaposed with the Enlightenment’s fascination with automata and mechanical “thinking machines.” Students from art, architecture, and engineering are invited to bring their own perspectives on how visual, material, and technical practices shape scientific imagination. The goal is to cultivate a historically grounded understanding of science as a contingent and inventive human enterprise, and to equip students to navigate scientific and technological claims with clarity.

3 credits. Eduardo Escobar.

HUM-324 – The Polar Imagination

This course will explore our fascination with the ends of the earth: the Arctic and the Antarctic. What is the history of our engagement with these regions long thought to be uninhabitable? What's important about the search for the Northwest Passage and the landless "North Pole," first in the age of big ice and now in the era of polar melt? At the other end of the globe, what does the vast and forbidding Antarctic continent have to tell us? What are the polar regions to us now, in times of re-escalating political tensions and rising temperatures? To give shape to these questions we will look at literary works inspired by the planet's extreme regions (for example, Mary Shelley, Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne and other nineteenth-century authors as well as contemporary writers), histories of famous explorations (for example, Shackleton's voyage to Antarctica), and recent scholarship on climate change and polar history. Along the way we will look at questions of conflict between the technologies of developed nations and indigenous people's habits of sustainability; the geopolitics of research stations; art activism; documentary filmmaking; polar tourism; and the fate of polar species in an environment whose climate is rapidly shifting. In short, the course is an advanced introduction -- no prerequisites other than the HSS core sequence -- to an interdisciplinary subject that touches upon history, science, technology, politics, literature, and art.

3 credits. Bill Germano.

HUM-354 – Philosophy of Infrastructure

Buried underground, concealed behind walls, there and not there. Infrastructure is often overlooked or made invisible, yet it defines the material basis and social promises of modern life. It mediates our needs and desires, divides private from public, and connects us to planetary systems and other lives across the globe. By tracing these underlying networks and technological arrangements, we uncover critical philosophical questions about environment, society, and inequality.

This course investigates theoretical approaches to and ordinary assumptions behind various physical and digital infrastructures as well as a broader range of things we might conceive as infrastructural, such as social programs, zoning, and urban ecologies. Course readings will explore public works and city planning; water systems and climate resilience; electrical grids, fossil fuels, and renewable energy; supply chain logistics and waste; and automation, surveillance, and artificial intelligence, among other topics. We will ask: What is infrastructure's place in our cultural imagination? How are values and norms embodied in technological design? What makes infrastructure just or unjust? How does it constrain or make possible different climate futures and alternative ways of living together? What happens when it breaks down?

3 credits. Matthew Bower.

HUM-358 – Studies in Cinema

What does it mean to inhabit the world as two? The couple — as a form, aspiration, mandate, and obstacle — has occupied writers, artists, filmmakers, and social scientists for centuries. Shaping discursive and institutional frameworks at the level of the body, the household, and the state, the couple continues to be one of the most tenacious, if contested and ever-changing, forms of loving and living. In cinema, the couple has been a central figure for narrative experiments in companionship, complicity, and enmity: the forbidden love in Douglas Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* (1955); the partners-in-crime in Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967); the neighbor-lovers of a waterlogged Taiwan in Tsai Ming-liang's *The Hole* (1998); the paranoid, self-isolating lovers in William Friedkin's *Bug* (2006) etc.

The course combines weekly film screenings with readings in literature, gender studies, film theory, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. We will, first, identify and analyze the potentialities and limits of the couple form, and second, develop analytical tools needed to understand and elucidate film form.

Students are expected to participate fully in class and keep a running journal. Class assignments will include presentations, a response paper, and a final 8–10-page term paper.

3 credits. Hicham Awad.

HUM-373 – The Comic Stage

Comedy as a dramatic genre debuts in fifth-century BCE Athens. Old Comedy, as the first phase is known, survives primarily in the 11 extant plays of its most famous and popular practitioner, Aristophanes. The subject matter of Old Comedy is inclusive of all facets of the human experience, targeting equally the intellectual, the political, the religious and the social, with particular emphasis on the conflict between the sexes and the generations, and with the heftiest doses of venom reserved for the pompous in all categories. And yet, beneath the ridiculous costumes, the slapstick stage action, and the no-holds-barred dialogue lies an often scathing commentary on the most pressing societal concerns: war and peace, democracy and tyranny, utopian visions, religious skepticism, class stratification, the status of women, contemporary mores, tradition and innovation in social structures and attitudes. In this course we will read, perform selections, and examine four Aristophanic plays *Knights*, *Women of the Assembly*, *Birds*, and *Frogs*. As the only surviving example of another distinct genre of ancient comedy, we will read Euripides' satyr play, *Cyclops*. New Comedy will be represented by the *Diskolus* ("The Grouch") of Menander, and from the Romans, Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* ("The Braggart Soldier"). In reading, performing, and critically examining a selection of ancient comic plays, the student will encounter the very beginnings of one of civilization's most fundamental and therapeutic inventions, comedy.

Note that this course has one prerequisite: a sense of humor.

3 credits. Mary Stieber.

HUM-375 – Critical Theory

This course begins with the post World War II generation of social thinkers and critics, such as Barthes, de Beauvoir, Foucault, Adorno, Horkheimer, Lacan, in the development of what later became known of as the critical theory of culture. We then proceed to more recent critics, each time taking our clues from real life examples. This course emphasizing learning how to "see" and think in "cultural practices." It offers a chance to have our understanding extended into everyday life and its ways of making us cultural beings.

3 credits. Sohnya Sayres.

HUM-381 – Post-Colonial Studies

This course engages with the legacy of colonialism in literature and theory. Topics include the relationship between colonizer and colonized, independence, apartheid, and socio-cultural movements from the contexts of South Asia, the Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa. We will explore the works of writers and theorists like Sylvia Wynter, Aimé Césaire, Silvia Cusicanqui, Walter Dignolo and Anibal Quijano, Edward Said, Ella Shohat, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Gayatri Gopinath.

3 credits. Victor Peterson II.

SS-333 – Politics of Ethnonational Conflict

In this class we will examine the movements for ethnic belonging, national liberation and independence that have become an increasingly important phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century. The course will analyze the nature of the ethnic conflicts, explore the historical roots and study thematic areas such as gendered dimensions, violence, nationalism and citizenship. Among the case studies considered are those of Eastern Europe (Yugoslavia's Wars and the question of Kosovo), former post-Soviet space including Ukraine, the Baltic region, Caucasus, and Central Asia, China's repression of the Uyghur minority, Myanmar (Rohingya), and Rwanda.

3 credits. Feruza Aripova.

SS-334 – Microeconomics

Microeconomics is primarily the study of the determinants of prices and the distribution of income. The focus is on studying the strategic behavior of individual business firms, workers and consumers in dynamic interaction with the institutions that shape and constrain this behavior, while also being subject to change themselves through legal and political action. We will look at how certain aggregate patterns emerge from the complicated interaction of interests while studying how societies can structure production and distribution systems toward specific goals.

3 credits. Loujaina Abdelwahed.

SS-357 – The Archives & The City

The Archive & The City offers students the opportunity to engage with the resources of The Cooper Union Archives as they explore the history of the institution and the city in which it lies. From its beginnings, The Cooper Union has been a civic institution as well as a college and has attracted archival material that documents the history of many social groups and institutions: from the records of The People's Institute to those of the New York Electrical Society, the speech of Chief Red Cloud to that of Ai Wei-Wei. Students will handle documents dating back to the 1860s—materials richly intertwined with individuals and events in the

wider world—and conduct in-depth investigations into their choice of topics and archival material. Though the primary material may be related directly to The Cooper Union, the questions students ask of it will lead towards broader social issues and movements.

3 credits. Mary Mann & Peter Buckley.

SS-388 – Comparative Cities

Cities are a defining feature of humankind as they are the centers of global trade, governance, information, the arts but are also where people experience life. This course explores various urban organizations in the United States, the “First World” and the “Third World” such as New York, Paris, Nanjing (near Shanghai), any town America, Jerusalem and how they affect immigration, education, cultural experiences and the standard of living.

3 credits. Edner Bataille.

SS-318A-1 – Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts

The figure of the witch has seen a dramatic resurgence in recent years. From TikTok tutorials on spell work to Etsy practitioners-for-hire, from American Horror Story: Coven to the boom in fantasy novels, pop culture has never been more fascinated with witches and magic. This revival coincides with a broader interest in spirituality, astrology, and mysticism. How did we get here? What are the origins of modern witchcraft beliefs, and why has the witch become such a powerful symbol of resistance and female empowerment?

This course explores the history of magic, witchcraft, and the supernatural from 1500 to 1800, focusing on both beliefs and lived experiences. We will examine the infamous witch trials, cultural anxieties about ghosts, demons, and magic, and the ways supernatural beliefs shaped daily life across Europe and its colonies. Our geographic scope includes France, England, Ireland, Scotland, the Holy Roman Empire, and the French Atlantic world.

Beyond content, the course emphasizes historical methods: how scholars interpret evidence, construct arguments, and recover voices from the past. Students will work closely with primary sources—trial records, pamphlets, treatises, and testimonies—and use them to craft original, argumentative essays that develop both historical knowledge and critical analysis.

3 credits. Chloé Roberts.

SS-318B-1 – Anthropology of Care

Care has become a central analytic in anthropology for understanding how people navigate vulnerability, create meaning, and cultivate relationships across social, political, and ecological worlds. This course explores care as an ethical and material practice that reveals how societies organize value, intimacy, and responsibility. We will trace the shifting boundaries between self-care and collective care, how care becomes entangled with inequality and violence, and how it shapes relations among humans, non-humans, institutions, and environments. Reading across global contexts, we consider how care intersects with struggles over identity and belonging, social hierarchies, and systems of oppression. Rather than treating care as a value-neutral good, we reflect on its ambiguities, contradictions, and possibilities—and ask what it means to act with care in an uncertain world.

3 credits. Steph McIsaac.

SS-318C-1 – 1947/48: Decolonization, Nation Building, and Displacement

This course offers a detailed look at the crucial period of 1947-48, a period marked by the end of World War II and its aftermath, escalating processes of decolonization and nation-building, and the redrawing of global political boundaries through partitions. Focusing on the British partitions of colonial India and the UN plan for the partition of Mandatory Palestine, the course examines how displacement, violence, and war, intersected with projects of sovereignty, national identity, and visions of national belonging. Through comparative historical analysis of interdisciplinary sources including oral history, cinema, and literature, students will critically assess how efforts at new regimes of international law, imperial withdrawal, and partitions shaped enduring geopolitical conflicts in the decolonizing Cold War world.

3 credits. Atina Grossmann & Ninad Pandit

SS-318N-1 – Histories of Race in Latin(x) America

This course studies the histories, cultural genealogies, and possible connections in the trajectories of race and racialization in the vast geographies of Latin(x) America (Latin America and the US population of Latin American heritage). Racial hierarchies helped shape asymmetrical power relations in colonial societies and postcolonial states in the Americas. However, racial and ethnic identities also informed forms of indigenous, Black, and anti-colonial resistance. Against a backdrop of discrimination and emancipatory hopes, depictions of race and racial mixing have been prominent in representations of the Latin American identity and in national ideologies of the region's modern states. This course traces continuities and changes in colonial and modern discourses about race from Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, South America, and the U.S. Latinx community. We will discuss such topics as the production of indigeneity, colonial taxonomies for racial mixing, race and gender in post-colonial Latin America, AfroLatinidad, and "Mestizaje" and the Latinx Identity.

3 credits. Emmanuel Velayos Larrabure.

History and Theory of Art | Core Curriculum

HTA-102 – Modern to Contemporary: An Introduction to Art History

This two-semester art history core course, developed as part of the Foundation year for students in the School of Art but open to all students, is organized around a set of themes running through the history of modernity from the 18th century to the present. Within specific themes, significant works, figures and movements in art/design will be presented chronologically. Students will be able to identify and critically evaluate significant works, figures and movements in art/design in the modern period; be able to describe the main social and political contexts for the changes in art/design over the last two hundred years; and engage, in writing and class discussion, with theoretical perspectives on art/design production. The course will involve museum visits. Grading will be based on class participation, papers, and exams.

3 credits. Lex Lancaster, Stéphanie Jeanjean.

History and Theory of Art | Electives

HTA-211 – The Renaissance in Italy

This course is an investigation of the art produced during the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy, where a revival of

classical learning led to an unprecedented artistic flowering in painting, sculpture, and architecture. The course will touch on such themes as beauty, power, violence, and love at first sight. We will explore the rise of the portrait, the development of perspective, the meaning of the city, and the emergence of patrons' desires in the creation of history's most famous artworks.

2 credits. Meagan Khoury.

HTA-275 – Twentieth-Century Art History: Latin American Art

This course explores Latin American art in the 20th century, focusing on the intersections between art and politics. We will examine how artists responded to authoritarian regimes and revolutions, using their work as tools for political commentary, resistance, and identity formation. The curriculum covers historical events and artistic movements in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and Chile. Topics include Mexican Muralism and other examples of Social Art from the 1930s and 1940s, neo-figurative and conceptual art that responded to military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s, and more contemporary works addressing authoritarianism and social justice. Special attention will be given to artworks by women, queer, Black, and Indigenous artists, expanding the canon of Latin American art history. We will analyze artist statements, manifestos, and secondary texts to understand the impetus behind these works and their lasting legacies. Artists studied include: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Cildo Meireles, Graciela Carnevale, Carlos Leppe, Ana Mendieta, Denilson Baniwa, and Rosana Paulino. The course includes museum visits.

2 credits. Carol Filippini.

HTA-328 – Dada and Surrealism

Since their appearance early in the 20th century, Dada and Surrealism have had a profound and lasting influence on the arts. This course explores the art and ideas of these two movements within the social, political, intellectual, and art-historical context of the years 1912–1960.

2 credits. Andrew Weinstein.

HTA-300A-1 – Single-Artist Seminar: Caterina Cantoni

In sixteenth-century Milan, Caterina Cantoni was celebrated as an embroideress. Her famous silk “needle paintings” depicted complex worlds of metamorphosis, myth, and gender. But her name has been erased by decades of patriarchal discourses minimizing needlework. This seminar introduces Cantoni’s art and explores the reasons for her erasure. Through reparative art historical study, we will recenter the meaning of early modern embroidered textiles within the broader history of women’s threadwork. Using Cantoni as an endpoint, we will go back in time to trace the transmission of sericulture (silk making) from China to Italy. Following the Silk Road, we will learn how the earliest globalized trade route was the source of our desires for luxury products.

2 credits. Meagan Khoury.

HTA-300B-1 – Single-Artist Seminar: Lygia Clark

This course will examine the life and work of Lygia Clark. From the mid-1950s through Brazil’s military dictatorship, her self-imposed exile, and return in the following decades, Clark consistently challenged the autonomy of the art object. After moving from Constructivist abstraction to Neo-Concrete art to extend the two-dimensional pictorial plane into architectural space, Clark increasingly depended on participation and psychotherapy to achieve “the singular state of art without art.” In this class, we will explore the artist’s radical experiments by probing specific concepts like anthropophagy, the organic line, non-objects, and relational objects, while approaching experiences of embodied subjectivity; the ethics of touching and feeling; and the politics of withdrawal. Finally, to

thicken the plot, we will invite comparison with the work of her artist contemporaries (Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape, Mira Schendel) as well as extra-artistic interlocutors (Pierre Fédida, Didier Anzieu, Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott).

2 credits. Melanie Marino.

HTA-313D-1 – Global Iron Age in the Mediterranean

Following the collapse of the Bronze Age and its networks of international connections, various regions around the Mediterranean basin experienced a period of social, cultural, and political transformations that resulted in a truly globalized environment during the so-called Iron Age (ca. 1100 to 550 BCE). From the Iberian Peninsula to West Asia and Mesopotamia up to Egypt, the Aegean, and Italy, this was an era characterized by the rise and fall of new polities and empires, high connectivity, common cultural trends, and a diversity of regional responses to them.

This class focuses on the local and global significance of material culture (buildings, etc) in the archeological contexts of the Mediterranean basin. We will investigate not only how art and architecture are a product of their social, political, and cultural environment, but also how people exercised their agency in an era of sweeping changes, travel, trade, and conflict.

2 credits. Kate Minniti.

HTA-313E-1 – Trans Aesthetics and Visual Cultures

How do trans artists and cultural producers contribute to the expanding field of transgender studies in the twenty-first century; and further, how do their aesthetic strategies shape our critical understandings of "trans"? Rather than a category of appearance or stable identity, trans aesthetics describes visual, material, and corporeal strategies for engaging with the world and making new things possible. In this class, trans does not merely describe the content of an artwork or text, but rather the unstable experiences of sense perception called aesthetics. This course offers a dynamic object-focused and theoretically robust approach to current trans visual practices, rather than a simple history of transgender art. We will study the work of artists, writers, and makers who mobilize aesthetic tactics that help us to engage with radical trans fugitivity, multiplicity, and wildness. We will focus on themes that are central to trans, trans-of-color, and trans feminist visual studies: visibility, surveillance, and abstraction; narrative storytelling and historical reimaging; affect, materiality, and corporeal unmanageability; biopolitics, ecologies, and necropolitics.

2 credits. Lex Lancaster.

HTA-313F-1 – Public Art in Times of Crisis: Exploring the New Deal's Cultural Legacy

This course explores the federal programs created to provide employment opportunities for artists and artisans during the Great Depression. Between 1933–43, programs such as the Federal Art Project and Section of Fine Arts supported the production of public murals, sculpture, posters, graphic art, easel paintings, and photographs from coast to coast. From post office murals to public statuary, much of the New Deal's material legacy remains embedded within daily American life — yet it often goes overlooked by many citizens and scholars alike. By the end of term, students will be prepared to weigh in on historiographic debates surrounding the socio-cultural role of New Deal art and design over time. Along the way, students will learn to navigate the Index of American Design, explore largescale examples of state-sponsored museum exhibits and stage design, and determine how local arts initiatives gave form to a sense of national culture amidst profound economic and geopolitical uncertainty.

2 credits. James Fortuna.