

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE COOPER UNION

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SUMMER 2025

HSS-4 – The Modern Context – Mexican Modernity: Revolution and State-Building

This section studies the history of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the cultural, institutional, and political consolidation of a postrevolutionary state in Mexico (1920-1940.) We begin by discussing the social and political conditions of Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and how they were radically changed during the revolutionary process. We will comment on the different political and cultural agendas that emerged during the revolution and the ways they were implemented in the following decades. Particular attention will be paid to the ideologies of race and racial mixing, the role of intellectuals in the state, education and institutional reforms, and new technologies that circulated in postrevolutionary Mexico (including typewriters, radio, and cameras.) We will study an array of primary texts (proclams, speeches, laws, and letters) and selected historiographical pieces.

3 credits. Emmanuel Velayos Larrabure.

HTA-335 – Art and Architecture of the Ancient Near East

The ‘ancient Near East’ is a term invented by western scholars to refer to a part of western Asia often called the Middle East in the time before the advent of Islam in the seventh century CE. It originates from the efforts of nineteenth century European scholars to discover the places mentioned in the Old Testament, such as the Tower of Babel or Ur of the Chaldees, and as a result it continues to possess a veneer of orientalist fantasy. Yet the ancient Near East some of the earliest evidence for many aspects of human society that we now consider fundamental, such as cities, towns, religion, writing, taxation and monumental architecture. In this course we will explore these aspects through the art, architecture and material culture left behind by the ancient inhabitants of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, from prehistory to the fall of the Sasanian Empire. In doing so we shall address such topics as identity, gender, religion and imperialism through the study of reliefs, seals, coins, architecture, pottery and statuary. In short, we will reconstruct the social history of the ancient Near East through art. This course is designed for students without prior experience in ancient art or archaeology.

2 credits. Henry Colburn.

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. Edner Bataille.

HTA-261 – Art and Social Practice

This course explores socially-engaged practices worldwide from the mid-twentieth century to the present. We will examine participatory, collective and interventionist projects that challenge the idea of the individual artist; undertake ethics of collaboration; negotiate symbolic and concrete action; resist conventional art settings; and push for art as a dynamic, shared, and politically impactful experience. Our readings will cover various disciplines, including radical political theory, sociology, theatre, education, psychology, and communication, reflecting the interests of artists and communities behind these participatory projects. Through our discussions and assignments we will work to decenter Euro-American frameworks to better understand activist-oriented projects within their specific contexts and surrounding social and political landscapes.

2 credits. Robin Simpson.

HUM-363 – Caribbean Literature and Societies

The Caribbean region is known for lush landscapes, pristine beaches, and iconic bits of culture such as reggae, Rastafarianism, salsa, calypso, and carnival. The beauty of these islands belies serious political and social issues of which visitors are generally unaware. However, the history and cultural practices of the region paint a different picture. In this course, we will examine how the earliest institutionalized and intertwined forms of violence and economics—including genocide of the indigenous population, slavery, the rise of the plantocracy, and the impact of globalization on the economies of the region—and their attendant/resultant forms of cultural production continue to shape present Caribbean life. We will examine the various systems of colonial and imperial power, past and ongoing, and their lasting impact in various ways across the region. Finally, we will consider the idea of the Caribbean as a haven for tourists that depends upon a sanitized representation of the region's history of institutionalized violence and exploitation. We shall conduct our investigations through film, literature, history, sociology, and theory.

3 credits. Tara Menon.