

COOPER UNION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND ART
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
FALL 2019

HSS1 (3 Credits)

HSS1 Freshman Seminar. A literature course concentrating on poetry and drama. Selected texts from antiquity and the Renaissance are common to all sections, with works from other genres, periods and cultures chosen by individual instructors. The course develops aesthetic appreciation of literary texts and encourages a range of critical responses. Through close reading and extended discussion students learn to articulate their responses in written and spoken form. *3 credits.*

HSS3 (3 Credits)

HSS3 The Making of Modern Society. A study of the key political, social and intellectual developments of modern Europe in global context. This course is organized chronologically, beginning with the Industrial and French Revolutions. Students develop an understanding of the political grammar and material bases of the present day by exploring the social origins of conservatism, liberalism, feminism, imperialism and totalitarianism. In discussions and in lectures students learn to study and to respond critically in written and spoken form to a variety of historical documents and secondary texts. *3 credits*

HUMANITIES (3 Credits)

HUM 243 The Fairy Tale. This course introduces students to the development of fairy and folk tales through history, and across cultures and geographies. While we focus on these tales in their originary contexts, we will consider the work they perform in such diverse modern appropriations as Disney cartoons, gaming, and the men's movement. Excerpts from the major collections of Western Europe, West Africa, the Middle East, South and East Asia will furnish our primary readings. We pay particular attention to the collected tales of the brothers Grimm, the Panchatantra, The Thousand and One Arabian Nights, The Tales of Anansi and Brer Rabbit, and Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang. Our investigation will be interdisciplinary, with our critical approach drawing from theorists such as Freud, Jung, and Frazer, and modern scholars such as Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes. *3 credits.*

Harold Ramdass

HUM 307 Theatre Collaborative. An examination of theater-making both theoretical and practical, students will work together to explore the act of play from the various perspectives of the actor, writer, director, designer, and producer. The class will explore ensemble driven

devised theater-making as well as more traditional methodologies in a study of process that will culminate in group projects inspired by the myth of Icarus. Throughout the semester students will be expected to attend several performances and subsequent in-class talkback sessions with guest artists. *3 credits*

Joshua Gelb

HUM 318 Creative Nonfiction Writing. This course will explore the creative possibilities of writing about reality. Students will read and produce many different genres, including the personal essay, cultural criticism, prose poetry, literary journalism, song lyrics, podcasts, even Twitter threads. By the end of this course, students should be able to write comfortably in a variety of forms, and to think critically about how each of those forms describes reality — what it includes and excludes, enables and disables. They should be able to find expressive possibilities in almost any subject, as well as to actively notice the world around them — natural, technological, social, intellectual — and then to articulate the things they notice. *3 credits*

Samuel Johnson

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 peoples' 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*

William Germano

HUM 348 Greek Tragedy. An in-depth introduction to Greek tragedy, both as literature and performance. The methodology throughout will be close-reading, using comparative translations, with portions of the texts performed in class. The genre of tragedy will be presented against the background of its historical and cultural context, Athens of the fifth century, BCE. The most significant surviving ancient critical treatise on Greek tragedy, Aristotle's *Poetics*, will be measured against the authority of surviving works. Some important secondary readings will be assigned, but the emphasis throughout will be on primary source materials. *3 credits*

Mary Stieber

HUM 358 Studies in Cinema. This course will provide a critical overview of experimental cinema in America, from the early stirrings of avant-garde activity in the 1920s and the film

poets of the postwar period to the '60s underground and minor cinema, moving finally to the varied terrain of the present. Topics will include abstract animation, found footage practices, expanded cinema, the diary film, structural film, and feminist countercinema, among others. In addition to viewing key works from these traditions, students will also consider the alternative forms of exhibition and distribution through which they have circulated, as well as their relationship to other genres and modes of production (amateur cinema, ethnography, exploitation film, Hollywood, etc.). A special emphasis in the weekly readings will be placed on writings by filmmakers, illustrating the vital links between theory and practice which hold these histories of radical moviemaking together. *4 credits.* *Thomas Beard*

HUM 374 Issues in Contemporary Culture. A survey of the cultural climate since the 1950s, including the influence of works by such writers as Benjamin and Bakhtin and the concern with contemporary life in terms of fundamental shifts in community, representation, identity and power. *3 credits* *Sohnya Sayres*

SOCIAL SCIENCES (3 Credits)

SS 323 Politics and Collective Memory. The political uses of collective memory can range from defining national and social identities to shaping public opinion. In exploring the interactions between memory and politics, this course will focus on the nature and forms of collective memory, its development and reconstruction and its relationship to structures of authority. Emphasis will be placed on examples from recent political history. *3 credits.* *Anne Griffin*

SS 334 A & B Microeconomics. Microeconomics is the study of individual economic behavior and how it leads to specific social outcomes in a capitalist economy such as relative prices and the distribution of income. This course presents an overview of the essential theoretical, historical and policy debates in the study of market processes in capitalist economies. We begin by developing fundamental economic concepts and examining some of the pertinent historical facts relating to life in capitalist economies such as wages, prices, profits, productivity and technological change. We then compare and contrast theories that purport to explain these historical trends. Course topics include: consumer behavior; supply and demand; production and the business firm; allocation of resources and business competition; the distribution of income; financial markets; global trading systems; and the relationship between markets, hierarchies and democracy. Questions that we will address include: How, exactly, do individuals and firms relate to the institutional structures in which they find themselves (the fundamental question of microeconomics vs macroeconomics)? Are there empirical regularities and patterns produced by market processes that can be explained using economic theory? Are the forces that produce these phenomena historically determined? Are social phenomena simply the sum of individuals' choices? How are individual choices constrained by social institutions? How do legal/political institutions shape market outcomes such as prices and profit? How do competing economic theories explain these phenomena? Do market processes lead to fair and optimal outcomes? What is meant by the term 'efficiency'? Are market processes stable? What are the benefits and costs of business competition? How should

governments regulate and shape market behavior? What is the role of financial markets? Is 'free trade' desirable? The course is intended for students who have little or no background in economics. *3 credits.*

John Sarich, TBA

SS 354 New York, 1820-1920: An Urban and Cultural History A presentation of two "maps" to the city. The first is a history of the built environment, focusing on the changing systems of transportation, the development of building forms and the way the city's population and functions have been distributed in that space. The second historical map is made up from people's imaginative responses to those changes, especially as seen in literature and visual iconography. Among the areas singled out for special examination are the Bowery and the Lower East Side, Central Park and the "downtown" of amusement and vice, wherever it happened to be at the time. *3 credits*

Peter Buckley

SS361 Urban Archaeology. New York City will serve as our model for exploring how the history of urban land use is illuminated through archaeology, and what archaeological excavation in an urban context entails. In class lectures and field trips, we will look at the geography and physical history of the city as preserved both in documents and in the archaeological remains of sites and artifacts characteristic of its successive culture periods from the prehistoric era to the early 20th century. *3 credits*

Celia Bergoffen

SS 369 Cognitive Psychology: Conversations on consciousness and attention. Consciousness is often called the main mystery in cognitive science. At the same time conscious experience seems to be trivial, we don't see changes in our awareness until we make a mistake in a simple cognitive task or someone tells us that we missed something salient. Consciousness studies is a multidisciplinary field in science that includes approaches and methods from neuroscience and physics, philosophy and anthropology, artificial intelligence and linguistics. We will try to learn more about the contribution of all these sciences, all aimed at answering one question: "What does it mean to have consciousness?" Some representative questions we will be discussing are: What is the function of consciousness? How intelligent is the unconscious? What is the relationship between consciousness and attention? Can a machine ever be conscious? Is consciousness fundamental in the universe (as Eastern philosophies argue) or did it emerge as matter became ever more complex (as Western science insists)? Is there a stream of consciousness or is this just an illusion? What could happen if we didn't have consciousness? The course brings together modern and historical ideas to give a perspective on how the problem of consciousness could be addressed. Each topic presents a question that we will try to answer, each topic includes reading part, demonstration of effects and experiments and a small written review task. *3 credits.*

Maria Kuvaldina

ART HISTORY (2 Credits)

HTA101(Fall), 102 A-D (Spring) 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. *2 credits.* *Adusei-Poku, Bedarida, Chamberlain, Jeanjean*

HTA 209 Medieval Art and Architecture. Investigates the art, architecture and archaeology of medieval Europe from Constantine (fourth century) to approximately 1450, a period when different cultures clashed and mixed together to shape the eclectic Western medieval world that rose from Roman imperial ruins and ideals. This course will follow a chronological sequence, but use recent data from medieval excavations to challenge traditional art historical statements. Early Christian, Byzantine, Barbarian, Islamic, Romanesque and Gothic periods are examined. *2 credits* *Michelle Hobart*

HTA 231 History of Industrial Design. In tracing the history of industrial design from its emergence at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the present, this course will examine not only aesthetics (of furniture and the decorative arts, typography, advertising, machinery, toys, etc.) but also the social and political forces that have shaped the many styles. Throughout, we will also demonstrate how movements in industrial design relate to parallel developments in the history of painting, sculpture, and architecture. *2 credits* *Andrew Weinstein*

HTA 277 Contemporary Art: Fluxus and New Media. This course examines the international artists group Fluxus from 1962-1978. Things we will consider include, but are not limited to: why and how this group came about and was organized; major influences; key sites of activity, a selection of primary artists and the group's unprecedented diversity; the breakdown of traditional media boundaries and the emergence of new media performance, objects, and video; intersections with contemporary ideas on organization, commodification, commodification, communication, automation and routine. We will focus on specific case studies of artists and artworks, reading historical and theoretical texts to help us understand the artists' strategies and important contributions. *2 credits.* *Mari Dumett*

HTA 297 History of Printmaking. Explores the history of printmaking and its various processes from the 15th century to the present with an eye to the unique contribution of this graphic art to the history of visual language in both popular and fine art. While major printmakers (e.g., Durer, Rembrandt, Daumier, the Nabis, the German Expressionists, Jasper Johns) will be addressed, attention will also be given to the practical and popular use of prints through the centuries. *2 credits* *Christina Weyl*

HTA 299 Ceramics Within and Beyond Categories. Ceramics, or fired clay, in its intrinsically multifaceted and global nature, resists a straightforward categorization, such as "crafts." It

signifies a medium-defined genre of visual art, that of material culture as well as socio-political practices which have been prized around the world throughout human history. Due to the absence of a core mega-narrative and central theories, investigating ceramics across the globe can be flexible and exploratory, dealing with various identities and cross culturally-connected and disconnected diverse lineages within its world history. This course will experiment with one scenario of the world history of the medium by unpacking ceramics as thing (material, technologies and objects), value (symbols, identities, aesthetics and concepts) and ritual (display, performance, community and daily life) through time and space. The class will proceed in two parts: reviewing selected historical episodes telling stories of contacts and exchanges; and introducing some major critical discourses and issues over the multivalent status of ceramics in relation to modern/contemporary art and society. As a point of entry to history, our global, chronological mapping will start with East Asia, one of the hubs of world ceramic cultures, examining its prehistoric and later enshrinement of the medium, and moving through the Ages of Exploration, Empires and colonial/postcolonial periods in Europe, Africa, Middle East. We will then return to an Asia in contact and conflict with 20th and 21st century Euro-America, where some artists/designers exploring ceramics' new potential as a distinctive material/medium have emerged as cultural celebrities. *2 credits.* *Yasuko Tsuchikane*

HTA 305 Performance-Performativity- Race and Queerness. How much do we perform our identities in everyday life? In which way are our Bodies inscribed into a pre-set hegemonic narrative? How much can we bend and transform the historical narrative of race and gender and how have performers and authors challenged identity categories in their works? Next to a critical understanding of the two different concepts of what performance is and how it is connected to performativity, this course aims to engage with the questions of race and queerness through embodied learning experiences and engagement in decolonial pedagogical approaches. The structure of the course is threefold- based on the following decolonial framings- Knowledge, Power and Body. This means we will first engage theoretical understanding of Performance Theory, Performativity and its History, followed by embodied exercises in relationship to the texts and in the last part we will move and work with invited guests in order to learn more about their practices and approaches on the question of i.e. the visual fixity of race and gender. *2 credits.* *Nana Adusei-Poku*

HTA 313 Q Seminar: Modernism, Colonialism, Internationalism. This course situates modernist painting within a global context. We will begin by considering how the major artistic tendencies of the first half of the twentieth century, among them cubism, abstraction, concretism, realism, and surrealism, developed amidst the circulation of peoples, objects, and concepts under colonialism. Then, we will trace how these tendencies developed differently in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the United States, connecting the work of individual painters to the larger themes of the postwar era: the aftermaths of Auschwitz and Hiroshima; the decolonization of the global south; the formation of international institutions; the spread of commercial culture; and the ideological divisions of the Cold War. *2 credits.* *Colby Chamberlain*