

COOPER UNION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND ART
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS - FALL 2022

7/7/22

HSS1 Freshman Seminar (3 credits) 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 The Making of Modern Society (3 credits) A study of the key political, social and intellectual developments of modern Europe in a 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and in lectures students learn to study and to respond critically in written and spoken form to a variety of historical documents and secondary texts.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.*

ART HISTORY CORE (3 Credits)

HTA 101(Fall), 102(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. *3 credits. Agnes Berecz, Stephanie Jeanjean, Melanie Marino*

HUMANITIES ELECTIVES (3 Credits)

HUM 242 Greek Mythology. The course will concentrate not just on the endlessly fascinating stories of the gods drawn from the classic sources, but on a critical analysis of the question: How do the gods fare throughout the course of western history? Periods to be focused on include the time of Homer, Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns; the Archaic period (the time of the Lyric poets); the high Classical period (the golden age of Greek tragedy); the late Classical and Hellenistic periods (the age of the great philosophers and their schools); the Augustan era of the Roman Empire (the time of Virgil and Ovid); and the Renaissance. *3 credits. Alexander Brock*

HUM 250 Shakespeare: Hamlet. Who is Hamlet? What is *Hamlet*? Shakespeare's most famous play has a complex history and an even more complex legacy. This semester's Shakespeare course will focus on one play – but what a play. *Hamlet* has been a celebrated stage work, an inspiration for artists and writers, and a headache for scholars: Shakespeare didn't leave us a manuscript, and we have two

different versions of the text, so any performance of the play requires a lot of decisions. Hamlet's story has become an international story, and the title role has been taken up both by male and female actors. The first half of the course will be an intensive, careful reading of the play and its historical context. In the second half, we will look at adaptations and disseminations – *Hamlet* in the visual and cinematic arts, in ballet, in famous stage interpretations, and as a means of connecting cultures: *Hamlet* off the coast of Sierra Leone, a Hamlet-figure in Indian cinema, Shakespeare's play in contemporary China. For four centuries, Hamlet has been a figure of youth struggling against systems, caught between identity and obligation. We will work together to understand what Hamlet – and Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, Laertes, and Old Hamlet – are up against, why they do what they do, and why the world has given them so much attention. Course requirements: unfailing attendance to our class meetings, weekly response paper-ettes, two research papers, and a bit of memorization. *3 credits. William Germano*

HUM 309 Art and the Crisis of Modernity. This course will reflect on how various artistic moments of the 20th century both expressed and shaped the world they were in. We will engage with some of the definitions critics and theorists have offered for modernity vs modernism and post-modernity vs post-modernism in culture and in art, including visual arts as well as theater, dance and performance. The course will take as focal points some of the artistic revolutions of the 20th century, particularly around the 1930s, 1960s, and 1990s, and how these revolutions were connected to radical changes in worldview. Students will gain broad familiarity with how to read avant-garde art and performance in relation to its surrounding culture, and will research artists and/or movements of their choosing for their final projects. *3 credits. Buck Wanner*

HUM 312 Islamic Aesthetics. 'Islamic' is not a unitary concept, neither is 'aesthetics'. In this course, we will explore the fields of knowledge created by medieval and modern deployments of the Arabic adjective '*ajib*' (loosely translatable as marvelous, wonderful, astonishing) to describe the nature, production, and performance of texts, objects, events, and places, and their corporeal and spatial affects. Doing so allows us to locate the place of wonder in histories of literature, engineering, and art whilst underlining the permeability between traditions and the radical potential of overcoming expectations of experience and scholarship. Objects we will attend to include the Quran, the Kaaba, luster-painted ceramics, medieval automata and later technologies of enchantment, talismans, flying carpets, and representations of Islam and Muslims in the museum and contemporary American popular culture. *3 credits. Khaled Malas*

HUM 325 Puppet, Automaton, Robot. They are us, and not us: puppets, automata, and robots are toys or machines that look like us (or parts of us). From antiquity to the present, we have imagined, and then invented, inorganic versions of ourselves, sometimes for entertainment, sometimes to perform essential tasks. This course will draw upon an interdisciplinary range of materials –from philosophy, the history of science, and psychoanalysis to drama, popular culture, art and modern medical prosthetics. Instead of separating the "scientific" from the "poetic," this course will introduce and explore ways in which we can think about what we want from our "artificial life," and how the boundaries between living/non-living require constant rethinking. *3 credits. William Germano*

HUM 389 Love in Western Art & Literature. This course address the representation of love in Western art, with specific attention to the body, gender, and identity. The course will be grounded across two crucial poles: the so-called Greek revolution as a founding moment in the West, with its idea of Eros and the ideally beautiful body, and the rise of the individual in the Renaissance/Baroque period, with its concepts of subjectivity, self and vision (including Shakespeare's provocative formulation of "a perjured eye." Readings will include Plato's Symposium, poetry in the troubadour and Petrarchan traditions, Ficino and the Neoplatonists, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Austen, Foucault, Derrida, Anne Carson and others). *3 credits. Tara Menon*

HUM 393 Environmental Ethics: Green Growth vs Degrowth. The call from the IPCC for “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” comes at a time when cultural production of utopias and visions of how to remake fossil fuel economies compete with dystopias, denialism, and appeals to realism that insist such change is impracticable. Countering these tendencies with imaginative possibilities requires not only literacy in climate science, but an ability to draw new constellations of ethical, political-economic, and cultural meanings from across divergent mitigation and adaptation pathways. This course asks how to collectively imagine alternative climate futures by bringing together multidisciplinary perspectives on economic growth and its dominant historical and temporal meanings. We will look critically to various philosophical debates, ethical theories, and cultural materials that shed light on the present climate crisis and place it within interrelated contexts of ecology and the biosphere, global capitalism and colonialism, sustainability and “just” transitions, contested narratives of the Anthropocene, eco-apartheid and forced human migration, geoengineering and technology, and social and environmental justice. *3 credits. Matthew Bower*

SOCIAL SCIENCES ELECTIVES (3 Credits)

SS 220 Environmentalism Urban Context: Past and Present. Human-environment interactions are at the center of debates in multiple fields of study. With an interdisciplinary approach, this course provides students with theories and methodological tools for investigating some of the most enduring questions about the influences of climatic and environmental changes on human history and the roles of people on environmental shifts or catastrophes. By focusing on environmental issues in urban centers and their hinterlands, we will look at the interpretation of the city as a constellation of institutions and social practices that transform nature over different temporal and spatial scales. Through diverse case studies, we will evaluate urban systems with regard to water management strategies, land-use practices, and the issue of sustainability. Course deliverables include mid-term paper, in-class group workshops, and a final project. *3 credits. Mitra Panahipour*

SS 340 Cause and Effect. Every day, we hear news reporters, podcast hosts, TV show hosts, and even professors talking about various issues, and along the way, they make causal claims that do not necessarily make sense. They are simply confusing correlation with causation, a common logical fallacy. Think about the following question: Does getting your master’s degree cause you to earn higher income? By how much would those two additional years in school increase your earnings? Well, most people would say, “Yes, of course, having a master's degree leads to a higher paying job.” You can get data on various individuals, their educational attainments, and their earnings. You can examine the relationship between these two variables. But are you actually measuring the impact of having a

master's degree on earnings? There are many other questions that you can try to think about in the same manner, questions related to individual decisions, business decisions, and government policies. In this course, we will learn how to think about these questions in a systematic way. The course will make you think critically about many claims that are being thrown at you by news reporters and even your professors. The course will also teach you how to work with various types of datasets to answer various questions in economics, psychology, business, politics, and sciences. You will learn common ways to summarize and present data and find relationships between different variables.
3 credits. Loujaina Abdelwahed

SS 345 The Raymond G. Brown Seminar: Understanding Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crises and Change. In this course we will explore what capitalism is, how (and in what sense) capitalism works, why (and in what sense) it doesn't work, where and when it works, how it changes over time and how our policy actions influence and condition its trajectory and very existence. A key point of contention among students of economic history is the tension between: (1) the changing and varied institutions of the capitalist mode of production across time and across geographic space and; (2) the apparent repetitive patterns identified by economic historians, which suggests that there exist 'economic laws of motion' that are, in some sense, independent of particular policy and specific historical institutional structures. The long-term repetitive patterns include: persistent unemployment; persistent poverty and inequality both within and across national economic units; repeated cyclical patterns of booms and busts (of varying periodicities) as well as severe economic crises affecting the global capitalist world every 40-60 years; degradation of the natural environment. To frame the questions, we are compelled to use a multidisciplinary approach, making extensive use of case studies and examples from history, anthropology, and the other behavioral sciences as well as recent developments in economic theory such as "complexity theory" and nonlinear processes. The emphasis will be on understanding the relationship between social/state policies and successful national development policies—which also includes the profound question of the meaning of 'development'. A fundamental research question might be: If the institutions that comprise the 'Developmental State' have been instrumental in framing, shaping (and sometimes taming) capitalism development – can social/political forces push the system toward economic transformation and technological change that is more tailored to environmental and social justice? *3 credits. John Sarich*

SS 347 A & B Macroeconomics. Both sections are open for freshman and sophomore students who are interested in taking intermediate and advanced classes in economics in the future. In Macroeconomics, we explore answers to questions related to the performance of the US economy. What is unemployment? How is it related to the living standard? Why is there very high inflation? We examine why the economy experiences good days and bad days and what the government can do to minimize the negative effects of the bad days. We also address other interesting questions like why we have inflation and unemployment, and whether they are actually "bad" things.
3 credits. Loujaina Abdelwahed

SS 384 Anthropology and the Other. This course provides an introduction to concepts in social-cultural anthropology. Students will rethink such concepts as culture, race, ethnicity, nationalism, transnationalism, gentrification, power and memory. We will use these concepts to address the questions of human universals and the origins of cultural differences. At the bases of these inquiries will be the question of the "Other." Who are the "Others" in culture or society?

3 credits. Ricardo Rivera

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 organization 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. Students are encouraged to contribute their own perspectives. *3 credits. Edner (Billy) Bataille*

SS 394 American Radicalism: Theory & Praxis. This course will serve as a think tank and workshop. Together, we will ask a number of theoretical questions about what the word "radical" means for those who use it, and how they associate it with something they diagnose as "American." These will be tangled questions about how radicalism in America traces a difficult conceptual and practical affinity between the genocidal, anti-black, and extractive violence at the root of this country and the radical positions assumed to effect change at this root. By studying the pamphlets, newsletters, manifestos, oral histories, poetry, and performances of black liberationists, indigenous land defenders, immigrant laborers, abolitionists, trans and queer activists, and feminist collectives, we will trace the problems and promises radicality posed to the intersections of their struggles as Americans and ask of their practices whether or not we can glean from them an evolving interpretation of what radical work entails. The hope of this course is to use these investigations to interface more critically with our own non-academic practices. The expectation is that we will bring the things that we think about outside of the classroom—our art and technical practices, social life, and more—to bear on what we will study together. What do these concepts have to do with what we already do? We will use the city as a laboratory for our study when we can. Throughout the course, our most important question will be: How do we *do* differently in the wake of a study on American radicalism? *3 credits. E. Barnick*

ART HISTORY ELECTIVES (2 Credits)

HTA 215 Nonconforming before Genderqueer. In their 2018 article, "Trans, Time, and History," scholars Leah Devun and Zeb Tortorici investigate the possibilities of using transgender as a lens to write history, what they call "trans before trans." Taking their inquiry as a starting point for our class, this course will investigate how art and literature have been used to imagine alternatives to the gender binary, focusing on the period between 1750 and 1950 in Europe and America. We will examine many different depictions of androgyny, examining its various functions as a spiritual ideal, as a critique of the gender binary, and as a way to express homoerotic desire. After briefly considering how the androgyne—a nonbinary gender—was imagined in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, we will examine writing by the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg and the long influence of his thinking on how Europeans and Americans understood the idea of an androgyne. Our inquiry encompasses study of Black trans history in the fugitive slave narrative of Harriet Jacobs and in the

androgynous sculptures of Harlem Renaissance artist Richmond Barthé. We will also study the lives and work of gender-nonconforming artists such as writer Rachilde and photographer Claude Cahun. *2 credits. Aaron Slodounik*

HTA 221 Buddhist Art: Origins to Modernity. As a part of the ongoing discourse on the tripartite interrelation among art, religion and modernity, this class investigates Buddhist art, the visual culture of one of the world religions, rooted in the premodern societies of India, Central, South East and East Asia and Tibet, from which its distinctive material forms, visual principles and ritual practices developed. More recently, the presence of Asian Buddhist material/visual cultures has asserted itself anew through transnational exchanges and confrontations, particularly between Asia and the modern and contemporary West. This course attempts to historicize this phenomenon by taking a macro approach to Buddhist art (without sacrificing specifics related to individual cases) by investigating two possible constituents of modern/contemporary Buddhist art: its core historical principles carried over from its origins, which have been considered “timeless,” and its uniquely “timely” complication of or deviation from its original systems. We will spend half of the course studying some original principles of historical Buddhist art in areas such as visuality, representation, copy, agency, function and performativity, while quickly tracing the geo-historical spread of the religion throughout Asia over a period of more than 2,400 years. In this section, we will visit selected works and sites that represent some typologies of premodern Buddhist art, such as relics, icons, mandala, pagoda, gardens and “Zen art,” and examine them in context, i.e., concerning their relations to the ritualistic/symbolic practices and fundamental philosophy of the religion. The latter half of the class will explore the issue of collisions in modernity between two claims: an insistence on the immutability and authenticity of persistent premodern systems of Buddhist art and experimentations reflecting the ever-changing globalizing identities of the religion and regions in Asia, corresponding to recent social, political and cultural landscapes, including museum displays, temple politics, Orientalizing commodification and appropriation by avant-garde artists. *2 credits. Yasuko Tsuchikane*

HTA 273 History of Photography: Contemporary Photography in the African Diaspora since 1980. This course examines the work of artists of African descent based in the United States and Britain from the 1980s to the early 21st Century to explore similarities and differences in the assertion of UK and US based African Diasporic identities in the photographic work of these artists as well as to examine “Black Atlantic” photographic practices. Students will explore the assertion of contemporary Black British/African American/African diasporic identities referenced in the photographic work of Black British photographers that includes but are not limited to Joy Gregory, Yinka Shonibare, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Faisal Abdu’ Allah, and African American photographers Carrie Mae Weems, Renee Cox, Albert Chong, and Latoya Ruby Frazier. The reference to Black British and African American identities in the photographic work of non-black photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe will also be examined. *2 credits. Rose Oluronke Ojo-Ajayi*

HTA 278 Modernism in Latin America. This course examines the emergence and development of Latin American modernisms in their so-called first and second waves. The first one, which unfolded from the 1920s to the 1940s in Brazil, Mexico and Cuba, witnessed the artists’ combination of imported European avant-garde tendencies—such as post-impressionism and Cubism—with local motifs to produce an art that could reflect a national identity. The second wave pertains to the

post World War II rise of abstract tendencies in South America, specifically, concrete abstraction in Argentina and Brazil, and op and kinetic art in Venezuela. Artistic modernisms in the region will be studied in connection with the political and cultural context in Latin American countries, specifically, the process of nation-state building, the rise of populist ideologies, and the incidence of developmentalism in the Southern Cone during the 1950s and 1960s. We will analyze a range of artists, such as Tarsila do Amaral, Candido Portinari, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Frida Kahlo, Wifredo Lam, Mario Carreño, Pedro Figari, group MADÍ, Lygia Clark, Helio Oiticica, Carlos Cruz-Diez and Jesús Rafael Soto. Topics might include: the strategies of modernity in Latin America, the new concept of “inverted utopia,” the role of the avant-garde group manifestos, the post-colonial, and the meaning of abstraction within a turbulent political milieu. We discuss crucial concepts that define cultural modernism in Latin America, among them, identity, indigenismo, costumbrismo, transculturation, syncretism, hybridization, and race politics.

2 credits. Melanie Marino

HTA 281 Ancient Mediterranean World. This course is intended to address selected topics concerning the reciprocal relationships among the fascinating and diverse civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean littoral and their neighbors to the East. The primary focus this semester will be on the Bronze Age-- the “Age of Heroes,” to the beginning of the Classical era, and the setting of the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey--with special emphasis on the interrelationships between Egypt, the Near East and the Greek Aegean during the time period ca. 3000 – 1100 B. C. We will look at the art, architecture, archaeology and a sampling of the literature of the periods and places under consideration. *2 credits. Henry Colburn*

HTA 285 Single-Work Seminar: Chartres Cathedral. This course surveys a single building in medieval France, Chartres Cathedral and it will focus on several themes that will contextualize the building in the city, its role with the community, the political powers invested in it and its more general historical and architectural surroundings. Once we analyze the master plan of the church with its sculpture work and stained-glass window narratives, we will explore the social resonance of this Gothic building, as a representation of spiritual beliefs, as a tool of political persuasion and the early creation of the cult of the Virgin Mary, which spread quickly through Europe. *2 credits. Michelle Hobart*

HTA 305 Performativity. Performativity is the capacity of speech, utterance, gesture, and language to impact or create the world. In this course, students will explore the relevance of speech acts to social norms and identity, as well as creative forms of self- and collective fashioning and redress. This course moves from debates around the performative—the study of words which do things—to accounts of gender, race, and sexuality which emphasize their constructedness and thus, their alterability. This course also prioritizes performance art as one among many answers to the problem of embodiment and experiment. Together, we will explore key texts and performances within the field of performance studies to address the generative exchange between art and critical theory. Key words or sites include the relationship of speech to deed; discourse to materiality; inscription to violence; and embodiment to history. Students will have the possibility of exploring their own performance practice in a final project. *2 credits. Sarah Richter*

HTA 313 G1 Seminar: Digital Art History. This course analyzes digital art history with origins in multiple art fields such as Conceptual art, Fluxus, as well as the fields of cybernetics, computation, and engineering. From conceptual art to artificial intelligence, the course surveys numerous aspects of digital art such as innovation in technology throughout the 1950s to the present and artists' responses and negotiations to these new technologies. Many exhibitions throughout the 1960s to today reflect this ongoing conversation between art and technology. We will look at not just the theoretical and historical texts, but also a survey of artworks, artists, and exhibitions to better understand how both inform each other. Some fields include net.art, surveillance, bioart, video games, and tactical media. Some topics will include feminism, race, and sexuality and we will keep in mind also the male and western focused digital art history but also how recent artists respond to these histories. The course asks the following questions: Who gets to participate in these technological innovations? How does technology spark innovation and progress? How is technology fraught with bias that can lead to the oppression of some individuals over others? What is the future of digital technologies and art?
2 credits. Constanza Salazar

HTA 314 Art Exchange Across National Boundaries. The course focuses on the cultural and political geography of artistic production from the mid-20th century to the present. We will engage with artworks, exhibitions, and publications as vehicles of cultural dialogue and tools of political propaganda and cultural imperialism. By studying the geopolitical trajectories of artistic practices and institutional networks, we will ask questions about why and how images and objects travel, and ponder the exchange of art and ideas in the field of global art and culture. *2 credits. Agnes Berecz*

HTA 324 Museum as Frame: Art in New York. Through class meetings and museum visits we will investigate the idea of the museum, its history, cultural significance, meaning and societal influence. In particular, we will consider how the museum experience affects the attitudes and assumptions of museum visitors. We will explore the intellectual underpinnings of the modern museum since the Enlightenment, with special attention to issues of nationalism and Eurocentrism; the complexities of museum sponsorship (public, private, and corporate), and how they shape cultural presentation; and the emergence, since the 1960s, of community-oriented museums alongside the growing importance in society of multi-culturalism and ethnic identity. We will also consider standard art-historical issues of style and society as they relate to the various artworks we see. *2 credits. Andrew Weinstein*