

# HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES THE COOPER UNION

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS SUMMER 2023



### ***HSS 1 – THE 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. Tara Menon.*

### ***HSS 4 – THE MODERN CONTEXT – QUEER THEORY AND POLITICS***

In this course, we will examine the crucial role that gender and sexuality have played in producing something we call modernity. We will think about the role that identity and categorization have played in producing modern subjects who experience genders and sexualities as either “natural” or “deviant” and how sexuality and gender function to index race and class to biological determinants. But the question what is political about queerness? will ultimately lead us to questions about how the governance of desire and relationality has determined our orientations toward space, time, and embodiment in ways that use queer theory to dismantle not only naturalized conceptions of the body and how and who it desires, but also the supposed boundedness of that body by which race acquires its sensibility, its narration as an individual in the linear time of “development” and “progress,” and its orientation within a binary of private and public that determines imaginaries and uses of space.

*3 credits. E Barnick.*

### ***HTA 313-H1 – THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY ART: 1989-PRESENT***

This course centers on the politics of Contemporary Art from 1989 to the present. With world events including the fall of the Berlin Wall, the revolutions of 1989, the massacre at Tiananmen Square, The Zapatista Rebellion, the end of Apartheid in South Africa, Occupy Movement, post-911, and more recently the #MeToo movement and BLM, artists from around the world have always been at the forefront of leading activist movements. Scientific and technological innovations and climate awareness have led artists to also adopt new techniques of artmaking to engage in the ethical implications of technoscience and our ecological impact in the world. We will analyze artistic strategies including public art, relational aesthetics, activist interventions, tactical media, and new modes of artmaking. We will also ask the following questions: What is the relationship between aesthetics and politics? What are the practical aims and goals of artists? How do local activist interventions impact and spur similar movements across the world?

*2 credits. Constanza Salazar.*

### ***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.*

### ***HUM 358 – STUDIES IN CINEMA: GUEST, STRANGER, AGITATOR***

This course sketches a history of infiltrators in cinema: guests who have overstayed their welcome; ghosts inhabiting the hallways of a manor; a heart transplanted into the body of a new host; a cinephile impersonating his favorite filmmaker; and, maybe, the Devil himself. In addition to developing film-analytical tools with which to interpret the alien as cinematic figure and form, we will look to anthropology, philosophy, political theory, literature, and film history in order to articulate the ethical and political underpinnings of in/hospitality. Films by Charles Burnett, Luis Buñuel, Abbas Kiarostami, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Elaine May, Charles Laughton, and Claire Denis, among other filmmakers, will be screened and discussed in class.

*3 credits. Hicham Awad.*

### ***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.*

### ***HUM 373-K – FIRST PERSON SINGULAR***

This course explores the creative construction of “self” in narratives written in the first person. We will investigate the role of the “I” in autobiographies and pseudo-autobiographies, legal and religious confessions, diaries and letters, memoirs and survivor testimonies. We will examine traditions of self-representation by focusing on concepts of truth, reliability, memory, authenticity and identity. We will consider the relationships between the narrator and the author and attempt to answer questions such as: What motivates an author to use “I”? What is revealed and what is concealed in a first-person narrative? What is the purpose of a self-narrative? How do dichotomies such as public/private, past/present, and open/hidden affect the creative “I”? We will delve into psychological, philosophical, legal and political dimensions of texts that come from different cultural contexts: Ancient Japan, Spanish Baroque, European Enlightenment and Romanticism, and Argentine concentration camps. Assignments include weekly 3-page reading responses, quizzes on assigned texts, and in-class group work.

*3 credits. Dina Odnopozova.*

### ***SS 347 – MACROECONOMICS***

Macroeconomics is the study of fluctuations in aggregate output, income, unemployment, and inflation. We begin by examining the nature and meaning of economic development, principles of national income accounting and measures of human development. We then proceed to study the history of U.S. macroeconomic performance, with emphasis on the current crisis and its international dimensions. We then turn to competing theories of what drives macroeconomic activity in a capitalist economy. Topics covered include theories of economic growth and income distribution, economic cycles, labor market dynamics, money and finance, foreign exchange rates and the impact of monetary and fiscal policy on the trajectory of the system.

*3 credits. John Sarich.*