NEW First-Year Seminars (199H1 and 199Y1)
HUMANITIES 2016-2017

CCR: Creative and Cultural Representation
TBB: Thought Belief and Behaviour

Half Courses – CCR

You’ve Got Mail: Letters from Ancient Literature and Life
This course will introduce students to one of the most crucial and wide-spread forms of written communication in the ancient world, the letter. We will sample the whole range of epistolography, from “real” letters bound to a specific occasion and composed with a pragmatic purpose (be they official or private), to multiple forms of literary epistles, including semi-private letters (such as those by Cicero, Seneca, and St. Paul), texts of various content (e.g. didactic or scholarly) cast into epistolary form, verse epistles (Ovid’s *Heroïdes*) and fictional letters (Alciphron and Aristaenetus).
Peter Bing, Classics

Homer and Derek Walcott
The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer powerfully inform the poetry of Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott, notably in his stage version of the *Odyssey* and in his great epic poem *Omeros* (the modern Greek name for Homer). In this course we will compare the work of these two great poets. Of particular interest will be how the modern Caribbean author re-imagines the ancient Homeric world. Readings will concentrate on the beautiful and profound verse of these two monumental poets, with some secondary readings to guide our reading of the complex *Omeros*. Shakespeare’s *Tempest* will be employed as illustrative of post-colonial and multi-cultural issues central to Walcott’s work. Writing skills will be practiced; brief weekly essays on the readings are required, along with a longer research essay. Small group and whole class discussion will be the dominant class activity. There are no tests or exams.
Jonathan Burgess, Classics

Image and Desire: Statue Love in Antiquity and Beyond
The story of Pygmalion, the sculptor who fell in love with the ivory image of a woman he had fashioned with his own hand, is one of Ovid’s most famous tales. Recounting the wondrous metamorphosis of an inanimate statue into a living being, it has undergone countless transformations of its own, fuelling for millennia the phantasy of writers and artists alike. Recent adaptations include Zoe Kazan’s 2012 film “Ruby Sparks”, in which a young novelist inadvertently writes a girl into being, and Spike Jonze’s 2013 movie “Her”, whose protagonist becomes infatuated with an artificially intelligent operating system, a disembodied voice in lieu of a voiceless image. Though unique in its enduring and multifaceted afterlife, the story of Pygmalion is far from the only tale of statue-love to have come down to us from Antiquity. Indeed, numerous ancient authors mention instances of erotic desire for, or even sexual intercourse with, *actual* works of art, not just poetic fabrications. In this course we will contemplate these ancient tales in their literary-cultural context and examine later versions of the topos from the Middle Ages to the present.
Regina Höschele, Classics
The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
Why did the Roman Empire decline and fall? In the eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon famously set out to answer this question in six volumes (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire). Although Gibbon’s analysis was hugely influential at the time and continues to inform popular opinion, it has been largely rejected in the scholarship of the last 200 years. However, while scholars have produced more sophisticated answers to the question, this is not to say that there is general agreement (or even that the newer answers are necessarily better). Indeed, some have wondered whether the question is even an appropriate one to ask. This seminar will explore the transformation of Mediterranean society between the third and seventh centuries and its underlying causes. As it turns out, the relevant issues tend to be the same ones that are relevant to assessing nearly any complex society in any age: the costs of war, environmental and demographic factors, including immigration and refugee crises, the flow of money, negotiating religious and cultural differences, and so on. Participants will be expected to contribute to group discussions, to complete small writing assignments, and to compose one longer final paper.
Kevin Wilkinson, Classics

Chinese Aesthetics and Art Criticism
This seminar focuses on different visions and methods leading to the sense of beauty in Chinese arts by examining various theoretical texts on music, painting, calligraphy, and literature, in the form of special treatises and as recorded in the Classics. The purpose of the theoretical discussion and textual analysis is to provide students with knowledge of Chinese arts and research skills on the aesthetic values in Chinese culture and their development along Chinese intellectual history. Questions to be addressed include: How should we understand the concepts of art and Chinese art? What is the role of the art and the artist in Chinese culture? What are the criteria of classification and evaluation of art? How to become a Master Painter? What are the political and social functions of art education? We will discuss the aesthetic meaning of Chinese poetry, calligraphy, music, and ritual, Chinese Garden and the beauty of landscape (shanshui, or Mountain and Water).
Johanna Liu, East Asian Studies

The CanLit Boom of the 1960s
Canada saw a literary explosion in the 1960s unlike anything this country has ever experienced before or will again. The long decade between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s saw the emergence of the best known, most respected names in Canadian literature, names like Margaret Atwood, Marie-Claire Blais, George Bowering, Leonard Cohen, Mavis Gallant, Margaret Laurence, Dennis Lee, Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, Al Purdy, Mordecai Richler, and Michel Tremblay. An outgrowth of my forthcoming book The Rise and Fall of CanLit (Anansi, 2017), this introductory seminar explores the principal causes, products, and legacies of the CanLit Boom of the 1960s. Besides their reading (novels, essays, poetry), students will visit some Toronto landmarks of the CanLit Boom, including Coach House Press, the House of Anansi, and the CanLit collections at the Fisher Rare Book Library.
Nick Mount, English

Cities, Real and Imagined
Cities have been described as places of desire and places of fear.
They pulse with life, bringing together people from different class, gender, and ethnic backgrounds, simultaneously giving rise to a sense of freedom and oppression, a sense of belonging and alienation. This course will explore the city as a physical reality that shapes our lives, but is also a projection of our deepest imaginings. Through readings of philosophical and sociological texts by influential theorists of the city, we will consider various ancient and modern conceptions of urban space and subjectivity. Alongside these theoretical readings, we will also examine literary and filmic representations of the city as a space of desire, memory and power.

Hang-Sun Kim, Germanic Languages and Literatures

Half Courses -TBB

Ethics and Fiction (provisional title)
The goal of this seminar is to investigate ethical questions by means of fiction, primarily novels. The idea is not to see fiction as a pedantic vehicle for ethical argument, but rather to consider how, and with what effect, fiction functions as an ethical medium. We will not simply judge characters as ‘likeable’ or ‘relatable’; rather, we will reflect on what fiction can teach us about the pressing challenges of choice and responsibility, and how it can (perhaps) enhance empathy.
The focus is on issues of individual identity and integrity: creating and maintaining oneself as a moral whole within environments hostile or indifferent to that end. All the works considered are novels from the period between about 1900 and 2015—for convenience, the ‘modern’ age, though we will analyze that notion. Class discussions will be enriched by visits from practising novelists, who will address the role of ethical insight in their own work.

Mark Kingwell, Philosophy

Year Courses –CCR

Poets and Power: Art under the Nazis
Did you know that Hitler was a failed artist? Goebbels a poet? Göring a collector of art? That there was an orchestra in Auschwitz? Why did art have this peculiar prominence under Nazism? In this course we will examine how politics and aesthetics interlace in various ways: the fascist cult of beauty; the theatrics of political propaganda; anti-Semitic “entertainment” film; and the eroticization of the Führer-figure. We will investigate this marriage between beauty and violence, and ask ourselves: what made Nazism so attractive to so many? We will begin by
examining the great aesthetic movements from the pre-Nazi era through to Hitler’s 1937 ban on “degenerate,” modern art—in favor of returning to Greek and Roman images of beauty. Throughout the course, we will consider some of the high points of German culture—in philosophy, music, and literature—and ask: How did a society that produced such works of genius also create Nazism and the Holocaust? Are there any similar mixtures of art and politics in our world today?
John Zilcosky, Germanic Languages and Literatures

**We are What We Eat: The Example of French Cuisine**
The study of French cuisine reveals a culture rich in controversy and conflicting narratives. When did it begin? Was it imported from Italy? Who invented champagne? Were Paris restaurants a product of the French Revolution? Did croissants come from Vienna? Is there really a French paradox? This course is an interdisciplinary probe into this rich and troubled history by considering, even sampling, things rare in university courses: baguettes, foie gras, cheese, madeleines, chocolate, pâtisseries. We also examine its darker side: legacies of colonialism and slavery, famines and inequalities that triggered revolutions, a pest that nearly killed all the vineyards in France, controversial treatment of animals. Students develop various research, writing and presentation techniques to demonstrate what is left of this reputation in an era of globalization and to compare the French example with those of other cultures right here in Toronto.
David Clandfield, New College

**Year Courses-TBB**

**Girls and Sex**
What are some of the strategies used by young women to negotiate media representations, sexual expectations, and consumerist pressures? How do they define themselves as self-directed, sexually liberated, and successful members of society, while at the same time understanding that there are larger structures of inequality and power that shape and constrain gender, sexuality, and self-identity? We will ask what feminism means in our society and investigate how young women are represented and represent themselves. We will look at Fiona Apple, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, Lana del Rey, Amy Schumer, Roxane Gay, Lena Dunham, Mindy Kaling, Sheila Heti, Nina Power, Malala Yousafzai, Emily Gould, and *Girls* and *Broad City*.
Eva-Lynn Jagoe, Spanish and Portuguese