NEW and Revised First-Year Seminars (199H1 and 199Y1)
HUMANITIES 2017-2018

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

Half Courses – CCR

Shapeshifting: The Politics and Erotics of Identity in LGBT Literature
We will read a selection of important LGBT novels in order to explore the continuities and changes in the representation of LGBT experience over the course of the last century. We will discuss these novels in relation to ongoing debates about identity politics and authority as these have been shaped by the urgencies of socially sanctioned violence, AIDS, legal disenfranchisement, and the culture of shame. Texts for the course will include Woolf, Orlando; Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room, Moraga and Anzaldúa, This Bridge Called My Back; Feinberg, Eight-sixed; Pratt, S/He; and readings in queer critical theory.
Instructor: Carroll Balot, English

Shipwrecks and Castaways: Disaster at Sea in Literature
For thousands of years, stories of disaster at sea—narratives of shipwreck and immersion, of survivors in open boats and castaways on desert islands—have been among the most widespread and popular of literary genres. Besides perennially gripping their readers, such stories provide a means of examining the natural and social forces and the ways of thinking and acting that cause seafaring disasters or enable people to cope with them (or not). In addition, these stories raise fundamental questions about the relationship between human beings and the non-human world and the line between humans and animals. In this course, we’ll explore the treatment of such questions in some great literary accounts of disaster at sea—potentially including Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Melville’s Moby Dick, Fred D’Aguiar’s Feeding the Ghosts, and Yann Martel’s Life of Pi. We’ll also ask what these works have to say to us today, at a time when intensifying hurricanes and rising sea levels are making the encounter with the ocean a newly urgent topic.
Instructor: Maxwell Uphaus, English

Art and Scandal
Art causes scandals for many reasons, provoking a range of consequences, including censorship, cuts to government funding of the arts or even destruction of the work in question. In this course we will consider a number of kinds of art scandal arising from exhibition in public galleries and urban spaces, including those that have to do with legal issues such as plagiarism and vandalism; aesthetic objections on the part of the public, ranging from perceived obscenity to simple resentment of abstract art; racism; sacrilege; and political subversion, amongst others. We will consider the work of artists including Chris Ofili, Joep van Lieshout, Paul McCarthy, Damien Hirst, Michael Snow, Sally Mann, Banksy, Rachel Whiteread, Richard Prince, Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, Carl Andre, Maya Lin, and Jeff Koons, amongst others.
Instructor: Elizabeth Legge, History of Art

The Quebec Difference: Language, Culture, Habits and Customs
Since November 2006, Canada has recognized that “the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada”, where “nation” is to be understood as a “cultural-sociological” term. What are the ingredients that make up this cultural-sociological nation? Starting with language, we will look at the status of Quebec French in relationship with other varieties of French in Canada and Europe. We will then turn to religion and retrace its declining power from the 1960s to the current ‘secular’ society. We will then examine Quebec Culture (with a capital C) with special attention paid to songs, movies, and TV shows. Finally, we will tackle many aspects of Quebec culture (with a small c), some of the habits and customs (food, festivals, the great outdoors, shopping) that set apart Québécois from other Canadians. Documents (texts, articles, blogs, movies, TV shows) will be available in French and English. No knowledge of French is required.

Instructor: A.M. Brousseau, French

Contemporary French Jews
This interdisciplinary course presents the situation of contemporary French Jews, using recent events in the news (principally the Charlie Hebdo and kosher supermarket attacks of early 2015) as a starting point. The course situates contemporary French Jewry in the context both of French Jewish history and of contemporary France, and its changing demographics. Topics covered include the demographics and politics of the current French Jewish population, as well as the specific challenges of studying identity in France, where official records of religious or ethnic affiliation are not kept. While the focus is on the vast majority of French Jews who are staying put in France, the course addresses the question of French Jewish emigration to Israel and elsewhere, looking both at the figures and the coverage. Readings include English-language media coverage of the French Jewish population and of French anti-Semitism, as well as scholarly and literary writing by and about French and North Africa Jews. The in-class component includes (subtitled) French-Jewish cinema and visual arts. Through critical analysis of these varied materials, the course addresses the cultural, intellectual, and religious life of French Jews today, while also teaching writing, research, and oral presentation skills.

Instructor: TBA - CLTA, French

Renaissance Antiquarianism: From the Middle Ages to Humanism (1300-1492)
The aim of this course is to provide a definition for Renaissance antiquarianism as a cultural phenomenon that influenced the way the past was interpreted between the 14th and mid-17th centuries, with an impact on Early Modern thought which led to development of a scientific vision of the universe. This cultural pathway represented a methodological perspective which involved the cross-referencing of heterogeneous sources, strongly linked to mankind’s perception of time and that helped shape a historical consciousness. Focus will be devoted to the history of the phenomenon and an explanation of its methodology.

In this first part, focus will be devoted to the birth of the antiquarian perspective within Humanism, in the attempt to underline the differences with the Middle-Ages. The program will cover from Dante to the fall of Constantinople and the discovery of America.

Instructor: D. Acciarino, Italian Studies

Renaissance Antiquarianism: From Reformation to Science (1492-1637)
The purpose of this course is to contribute to the promotion of new knowledge on antiquarian studies in the Renaissance and demonstrate how the antiquarian approach – that based the growth of thought on documented sources and empirical evidence – played a primary role in
the evolution of the entire cultural/intellectual life of Early Modern times. The aim of this second part is also to confront and interconnect the different humanistic approaches which contributed in spreading the antiquarian method throughout Europe. The issues and debates of the time will be investigated and reconstructed, also keeping into account their pivotal relation with the growth of the Protestant Reformation.

The approach will be transnational, considering scholars coming from all regions of Europe – mainly Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and English.
Instructor: Damiano Acciarino, Italian Studies

Urban Landscapes: City Literature between Utopia and Dystopia
The course will explore the many facets of city literature, addressing questions such as: how do the literary arts contribute to the shape of urban landscapes? Which is the relation between the literature of the metropolis and the utopian and dystopian traditions? What are the material repercussions of real and fictitious urban spaces on those who imagine and inhabit them? We will study the creation of the city from the perspective of its builders and inhabitants, exploring a range of cities, both visible and invisible.
Instructor: Eloise Morra, Italian Studies

Beyond the Page: Visuality and Intermediality in Literature
The course will explore various facets of interaction between literature and the visual arts, addressing questions such as: which kind of challenges do we face when attempting to look at word and image in one glance? What kind of elements lying in-between media can be of methodological interest? How can we theorize these intersections, overlaps, or gaps between the literary and visual domains? The instructor and the students will be engaged in a collaborative effort to devise a ‘word-and-image toolkit’, ready to use as direct application in individual research projects.
Instructor: Eloisa Morra, Italian Studies

Imagining Biblical Lives: The Growth of Jewish Traditions
What happened to Eve after she was expelled from the garden? Such questions sparked the interest of ancient Jewish writers. The course examines the development of traditions about biblical figures such as Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Job, and Lady Wisdom, in interpretive writings: the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and Dead Sea Scrolls.
Instructor: Sarianna Metso, Near and Middles Eastern Civilizations

Imaginary Galicia
Galicia was an invented province of Austria-Hungary, created at the first partition of Poland in 1772. From the moment of its creation, it stimulated a very wide range of literary representations. As if to mirror it’s invented political status, the Galicia that appears in fiction is a world of fantastic wonders, strange delights, and ferocious terrors. Whether in Austrian, Jewish, Polish, or Ukrainian national imaginations, Galicia is a place with a uniquely hybrid culture. We explore this imaginary place through the writings of Ivan Franko, Joseph Roth, Stanislaw Lem, Bruno Shultz, Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, Andrzej Stasiuk and other authors from a variety of traditions.
Instructor: Maxim Tarnawsky, Slavic Languages and Literatures
A Brief History of Love in the Western World
Through a selection of philosophical, medical and theological treatises about love, and through samples of literary texts about love written from the classical antiquity into the present, students will become familiar with the pivotal moments in the development of an enormous Western intellectual tradition regarding the subject of love. We will discuss how did the foremost thinkers and writers in the history of the Western world conceive the idea of love; how did the notions of sexuality and gender play into that idea, and how did these notions carry on (or not) into our present understanding of love, sexuality and gender. The practical purpose of the course is to help students develop fundamental skills of university education: conducting research, staging an effective presentation, producing a well-written academic essay, and participating in constructive classroom discussion.
Instructor: Sanda Munjic, Spanish and Portuguese

Half Courses - TBB

Language and Social Justice
This course explores how language is used to construct and reinforce unjust social structures. Topics may include: the underlying sexism, classism, racism, and ableism of prestige dialects and prescriptive language education; the history and consequences of national language movements; language endangerment, documentation, and revival; sign languages and language rights for the deaf and hard-of-hearing; popular media representations of linguistic variation, especially vocal fry, uptalk, and regional accents; and the relationships between language and sex, gender identity, and sexuality.
Instructor: Nathan Sanders, Linguistics

The Psychology of Communication and Conflict
This course is a skills-based approach to the psychology of effective communication and conflict resolution. Drawing from research and project experience in social psychology, political science, and related fields, we will explore topics such as persuasion and behaviour change, implicit and explicit processes in interpersonal and intergroup conflict, and effective conflict resolution strategies, using multiple frameworks including nonviolent communication, indigenous and community-based self-governance approaches, and grassroots principles that have been effective in past social movements. The goal is for students to have gained a research-grounded understanding of communication and conflict, and to have laid a foundation of skills for applying this knowledge in professional contexts. The course will involve both speaking and written components, with several types of feedback, both peer-based and prof/TA-based, to help the class collectively become more effective communicators.
Instructor: Dan Dolderman, Psychology
The Psychology of Magic
As magicians entertain us with their tricks, they are using profound insights into human psychology. They capitalize on their understanding perception, decision making, logic, memory, and verbal abilities. In this class we will analyze the psychological basis of many magic tricks and use magic in order to explore several aspects of psychology. The class will require reading of review-style scientific articles and book chapters as well as watching and analyzing magical tricks.
The only prerequisite is a curious and critical mind.
Instructor: Dirk Bernhardt-Walther

Religion, Laws, and Ethics
While for many people in our society, religion is a private and even an inner matter, there are major religious traditions that see laws as creative of holiness and as key to righteousness. This course will examine how religious traditions view the positive role of laws, and how laws can be connected to ethics. We will look at several key issues, including land and property, marriage and women’s rights, and the place of minority religious communities.
Instructor: Bob Gibbs, Study of Religion

Year Course – TBB

There’s Something About Mary
Mary of Nazareth has always held a central place in the Christian imagination. In this seminar, we will explore the image of Mary as a model of holiness, icon of the Church, and force of creative disruption, from the narratives of the Christian scriptures in the first century to the pop iconographies of Madonna and Beyoncé today. The seminar also aims to instill first-year students with a thorough introduction to the academic and conceptual tools they will need to thrive in the Humanities. Readings and discussions will engage various historical, literary, philosophical, ethnographic and religious interpretations of Mary and Marian devotional traditions, while thematic workshops will cover such topics as the practices and ethics of university study, note-taking and reading strategies, research, essay writing, exam preparation and effective oral communication.
Instructor: Reid B. Locklin, St. Michael’s College

Of Grave Robbers and Grade Grubbers
An opportunity to explore the theme of death, along with such correlates as aging, mourning, the quest for immortality, the afterlife, haunted graveyards and zombies! Readings and discussions will engage various historical, literary, philosophical, scientific, and religious meanings of death, while thematic workshops will cover such topics as classroom civility and work ethics, note-taking and reading preparation, library research and citations, essay writing, exam preparation, and effective oratory. Through the gradual development of a multistep assignment, students will learn to interrogate sources from the standpoint of history, literature, and philosophy, thereby achieving awareness of what distinguishes these fields and makes them relevant for content-oriented university courses. As a memento mori, this seminar also aims to instill incoming students with the urgency of acquiring the basic work habits, research skills, writing techniques, and conceptual tools they will need to thrive as undergraduates!
Instructor: Jean-Olivier Richard, St. Michael’s College
Half Course – CCR or TBB

The Exotic
How are notions of the strange, the unusual, and the foreign used by a culture to explore its own values and ideals? This class will examine the manner in which the cultures of classical Greece and Rome talked about other peoples and their customs. We will look at a variety of instances in which various fantasies of “the exotic” served indigenous projects that were aimed at articulating key themes and preoccupations central to Greco-Roman thought. And we will explore in particular the manner in which these often fantastic stories about others were used to make a case for the superiority of Greek and Roman culture and values. That is, we will talk about the way in which exoticism can serve to consolidate a sense of some centre as being in fact central.

We will survey a variety of texts and genres including drama, history, philosophy, natural science. We will also spend some time discussing the ways in which some of these same issues are still active within a more modern, contemporary context.
Instructor: Erik Gunderson, Classics

Year Course – CCR or TBB

Enchantment, Disenchantment, Re-Enchantment
Disenchantment is associated with modernity, secularisation and progress, and has traditionally been understood as the successor to the enchantment of the antique and mediaeval worldviews, associated with wonder and transcendence. Re-enchantment, a term increasingly encountered in popular and academic contexts alike, challenges this notion of progress. As an ongoing phenomenon, it points toward a complicated dialectic between enchantment and disenchantment, revealing both a desire for move forward, and a nostalgia for an enchanted past. This course will examine these three ideas sequentially and in dialogue through a series of readings taken from literature, philosophy, theology and fine art, ranging from Plato to contemporary magical realism.
Instructor: Alexander Hampton, Study of Religion

REVISED

Half Courses

CCR
Homer and the Trojan War down through Time
The timeless tale of the Trojan War—including the seductive Helen, the heroic Achilles, the fall of Troy, and the return of Odysseus—has always remained relevant. We will explore creative works inspired by Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, beginning with the Homeric epics and the larger story of the Trojan War in the "Epic Cycle." Then we will study different "receptions" of Homer and the Trojan War, both ancient and modern. Ancient works include the satyr play Cyclops by Euripides and the supposedly first-hand accounts of the Trojan War by "Dictys" and “Dares." Modern reception of Homer and the Trojan War includes the best-selling novel The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller, superb works by Atwood and Walcott, and the entertaining movies
Troy and O Brother, Where Art Thou?. Such fascinating material will provide us with rich evidence for the enduring appeal of Homer and the Trojan War.
Instructor: Jonathan Burgess, Classics

TBB
Exploring Heritage Languages
We will investigate how speakers use Heritage Languages in Toronto. We will examine recently collected data from Cantonese, Korean, Polish, Russian, Italian, Ukrainian and Faetar speakers in the GTA. Through weekly assignments, we will look for speech patterns that differentiate first, second and third generation speakers in Toronto from corresponding speakers in their countries of origin, and look at the effects of language attitudes and usage (who do you talk to? what do you use the language for?). Politics, policy and educational practices will also be explored.
Instructor: Naomi Nagy, Linguistics

Ethics and Fiction
The goal of this seminar is to investigate ethical questions via works 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.
Instructor: Mark Kingwell, Philosophy