

NEW STRATEGIES FOR THE HUMANITIES 2019-2022 Awards

COMPASS COURSE

History of the Self: Inventing Identities (Fall 2019)

Kathleen Donegan (English)
Damon Young (French; Film & Media)
Michael Mascuch (Rhetoric)

This fall's theme is "Histories of the Self: Inventing Identity." Did you know that the idea that each person has a "self" is actually an invented concept? Every time you post something on Instagram, you are involved in that long history of self-creation. So, how do we shape selves? What does it have to do with truth, with desire, with performance, with play? We will explore many forms of self-representation as they've changed over time, and ask how different forms of humanistic expression – language, image, and media – have shaped what we've come to think of as identity. Authors include St. Augustine, Charlotte Bronte, Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, Gertrude Stein, Cindy Sherman, and Instagram.

World Cities: Shanghai – St. Petersburg – Berlin (Fall 2020)

Harsha Ram (Slavic Languages and Literatures; Comparative Literature)
Lilla Balint (German)
Weihong Bao (Film & Media; East Asian Languages + Culture)

The course explores three world cities located across the breadth of Asia and Europe, retracing the stories, myths, symbols and fantasies which Shanghai, St. Petersburg and Berlin have inspired. Does each of these cities have its own story? What were its cultural forms? How did these cities come to embody the thrills and challenges of modern life? Were they able to satisfy the hopes and aspirations of a large and diverse urban citizenry? How did urban culture and national history become intertwined? In what ways did each city become a cradle of mass politics, shaping the major political and economic systems of the twentieth century: capitalism, communism and fascism? Over the semester we will examine representations of each city and the cultural production of its inhabitants, across two centuries, in multiple genres ranging from literature and cinema to architecture, monuments and memoirs. "New" cities on "old" continents, Shanghai, St. Petersburg and Berlin speak to us of our modern times, from the everyday life of ordinary citizens of the metropolis to the extremities of war and revolution.

Borders and Belonging: Reading Refugees through Law, Literature, and Film (Spring 2021)

Debarati Sanyal (French)
Samera Esmeir (Rhetoric)
Karl Britto (French; Comparative Literature)

What makes someone a refugee? How do people inhabit placelessness? What kinds of lives can refugees build, what kinds of communities can they forge, even when they are in exile, in transit, or in detention? In this course, we will read and

discuss legal and political texts on refugees and their rights, and we will closely analyze literature, photography, and cinema representing refugee experience. We will consider the status of the refugee in relation to that of the citizen, and will work to understand how refugees' lives are shaped by both humanitarian impulses and security-driven practices of surveillance and control. In the face of often dehumanizing treatment, how do refugees tell their own stories, and on what terms? Authors will include, among others, Hannah Arendt, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Sylvain George.

Indigenous Arts in the Americas: Old and New Media (Fall 2021)

Julia Bryan-Wilson (History of Art)

Beth Piatote (Comparative Literature; Native American Studies)

Natalia Brizuela (Spanish and Portuguese; Film and Media)

This class investigates recent Indigenous creative practices—including poetry, film, dance, photography, and textiles—from across the Americas to think about how these forms of making and expression are not discrete but rather intimately woven together. Looking at work from North and South America such as the novels of Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), the auto-ethnography of Davi Kopenawa (Yanomami), the paintings of Carmezia Emiliano (Macuxi), and the experimental video of Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk/Pechanga), we will explore how conventional notions of “old” versus “new” media are irrelevant as these makers, artists, artisans, and writers urgently draw upon historical traditions in order to reimagine alternative futures. Each professor will illuminate a series of keywords -- including life, time, story, and nature -- from the perspective of their own disciplines (literature, film/media, visual arts) with an emphasis on social justice. Keywords: Indigenous arts, life, time, nature, story

What is Asia? (Spring 2022)

Chenxi Tang (German)

Colleen Lye (English)

Alan Tansman (East Asian Languages +Cultures)

*As the largest and the most populous geographical and cultural entity, Asia has played a dominant role in the world's politics, economy, and culture. But what is Asia, in the minds of both Asians and others? This course approaches this question from three perspectives: the construction of Asia as a cultural space by Europeans from Greek antiquity to modern times; Asia's own exploration of its identity as a cultural and political sphere, from ancient times to the present; and the imagining of Asia in the United States, from the beginning of the so-called American century to the present moment when US hegemony is perceived as being under threat by the rise of Asia. Linking these perspectives is an investigation of Asianness itself, through which we will explore urgent cultural and political issues that beset our world: race and identity, empire and clash of civilizations, cosmopolitanism and Orientalism, geopolitics and global cultural politics. We will read seminal texts in world literature from the first extant Greek tragedy *The Persians* to Jack London's short stories and contemporary Asian-American, Taiwanese, and Japanese fiction, and engage thinkers from Hegel and Heidegger *In Europe* to Okakura Tenshin in Japan and Kang Youwei in China. We will explore the construction of Asian-ness through popular culture as well, including science fiction, American and Asian movies, and popular music. Keywords: Asianness, Race, Global Cultural Politics, World Literature, Popular Culture*

Comedy and Violence (Fall 2022)

Catherine Flynn (English)

Mario Telo (Classics; Comparative Literature)

Daniel O'Neill (East Asian Languages +Cultures)

This course will examine the relation between comedy and violence in ancient comedy, turn of the century European literature, and contemporary film. It will consider the contemporaneous meanings of particular styles of comedy and modes of violence, examining their philosophical, literary and filmic significance as well as their political and historical valences. It will also reflect on the interpretive and ethical demands these texts make on contemporary readers.

MENTORED-RESEARCH LABS

Performance and Democracy: Special Projects on Participation and Representation (Spring 2020)

Angela Marino (Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies)

In the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections, this course is an opportunity to tackle some of the most pressing questions of our current political moment. What constitutes the right to vote? Who gets to speak and how? What ways does visibility in media, on the streets, or on stage, influence the democratic process? From all these questions, it is difficult to separate performance from democracy. Considering each term within its own disciplinary debates and methods, we will focus on the intersections where politicians perform as actors, where the vote is linked to embodiment, the script of a campaign speech taps into social drama, and where affect-feelings work on the hearts and minds of voters. What might performance tell us about the ideals and problems we currently face in our political systems? This research-oriented 2-unit course includes a 6-week “boot camp” on political theory and performance studies alongside hands-on training in technical and performance-based research methods. Students will develop independent and team-driven research skills with the opportunity to produce original podcasts with video.

Arts of the Self: Identity and Self-Representation from the Diary to A.I. (Spring 2020)

Damon Young (French; Film & Media)

What is it to have (or be) a self? How do different media technologies (writing, photography, digital media) generate different forms of selfhood? Is the self a brain, a soul, a mass of data? What can art--and science--tell us about the self? In this hands-on, theory/practice research seminar, we will consider shifting paradigms of selfhood within the arts and sciences, as a context for exploring contemporary artistic practices of self-portraiture and vernacular practices of social media. Working in the Digital Media Lab with guided instruction, students will collaborate on a video essay on a topic of shared interest (such as artificial intelligence, neuroscience, or social media ‘selves’). In the second half of the semester, students will work in mentored groups on their own creative or artistic works of self-portraiture in literary, visual, or digital form, culminating in an informal, group exhibition. No art practice background is necessary, but students should be motivated to explore alternative forms of research and creative practice around the ever-changing topic of the ‘self’.

The American West: Wilderness, Myth, and Sacred Place (Fall 2020)

Patricia Steenland (College Writing)

What has “the West” meant to the American imagination? An ever expanding frontier awaiting civilization; a pristine wilderness untouched by human presence; a place to be free. These concepts remain powerful on a symbolic level and continue to affect our public discourse. But what happens when these concepts are explored in the context of a particular Western place, one that has an iconic presence in American culture? Using a case study approach, this course will explore central concepts about the American West through focusing on the Alabama Hills in the Owens Valley, part of the Eastern Sierra that has been used since the beginning of the film industry as a set and is now a “bucket list” place for Instagrammers. We will look at how conventional concepts of the West surface in the ways the Alabama Hills have been and continue to be used. But we will also explore the ancestral history of the actual place itself, home for thousands of years to indigenous peoples. Students will be introduced to primary source research and relevant archives, working with the Bancroft Library, the Lone Pine Film Museum, and tribal elders and leaders who will partner with our class.

All the Feels: Art and the Cultural Politics of Emotion (Spring 2021)

Dora Zhang (English; Comparative Literature)

Joy, grief, shame, fear, hope: emotions are a familiar part of private experience, but they are also public, social, and political. In this course we will consider the role that emotions play in galvanizing social movements and shaping our understandings of ourselves. We will begin by reading different theoretical perspectives (e.g. philosophy, feminist theory, psychology) paired with artworks that explore how emotions are inflected by race, gender, and sexuality in American life. Art and emotion have long been closely linked, and we will be especially interested in thinking about the role that artistic practice and representation can play in amplifying or resisting certain emotions. After an introduction to research methods in the arts and humanities, students will undertake a collaborative research project, as well as a final project that creatively represents an emotion in literary, visual, or sonic form. The course will culminate in a conference and a concluding exhibition.

Lost and Found: Berkeley Food Files (Fall 2021)

Jill Miller (Art Practice)

In this course, we'll use collaborative techniques like workshopping and divergent thinking to spark creative practices and develop projects that combine food studies with archival research and studio art. First, we'll delve into local food history and explore the archives at the Bancroft Library and Berkeley Historical Society where we'll uncover lost recipes, remedies, and stories. Our findings will shape projects that critically examine historical documents and probe the limits of the archive itself. In the second part of the semester, students will be mentored through their individual or collaborative projects and will reflect on their classmates' research through critiques and small-group conversations. Students will have the option to work in different forms, including: zines and bookmaking, essays, video installation, socially engaged art, performance art, and public practices. The class will culminate with a public art exhibition and digital publication. No art experience is necessary, but students should be prepared to make creative projects in an experimental setting. Keywords: food studies, archives, studio art

Remembering Eugenics at Berkeley and in California (Spring 2022)

Susan Schweik (English)

This course will confront the histories and legacies of eugenics close to home, at UC Berkeley, in the town of Berkeley, and in California. Our university's a good location for this work, since "higher education" has been a key site for the development of the structures through which eugenics is conducted: IQ and achievement testing, disciplinary policies, segregation, ideas about who's fit to, and who deserves to be, in a place like this. In a sense, this project is the start of an act of reparation. Critically and creatively, we'll challenge the forgetting of eugenics, remember histories beyond victimhood--transgression, resistance, sustenance-- and think about how race, nation, disability, gender, class, and sexuality are tied up with eugenics in this place. Through individual and group research projects, art work, performance, and designs for memorials or anti-memorials, we'll explore the politics and ethics of commemoration at this moment of eugenics' resurgence. Keywords: eugenics, social justice, bioethics, local history, archives

Unlocatable: Seeing Hong Kong and its Arts (Fall 2022)

Winnie Wong (Rhetoric)

A city of great change and tiny spaces for them, Hong Kong abounds in contradictions and movement. Marked by a history of migration, refuge, exile, and capital flows, its preferred cultural forms are fleeting ones, born of dislocation and relocation. What is the relationship between an art form and the place in which it was produced? How do we communicate the particularities of a location while doing justice to the universality of an artwork's expression? This course immerses students in the history of the arts in Hong Kong, the Pearl River Delta region, and its diasporas. Students will research art in many media, from comedy to graphic design, from kung fu to video art. Collaborating with the Asian Art Museum, students will produce digital materials for public engagement. The course will culminate in an online exhibition of students' work, an effort to "locate" and "see" Hong Kong and its arts. Keywords: Art, Media, Curatorial Practice, Hong Kong, Pearl River Delta

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SEMINAR

From Democracy to Decolonization: The History and Futures of Museums (Spring 2020)

Lauren Kroiz (History of Art)
Beth Piatote (Comparative Literature; Ethnic Studies)
Leigh Raiford (African American and African Diaspora Studies)

In 1793, the National Assembly in France opened the Louvre as an art museum, articulating a Western connection between museums and the spaces of democracy that continues to the present. More recently, publics have begun to hold museums to account for the legacies of colonization that undergird those of democracy. To consider the future of democracy, we will interrogate decolonizing engagements with these inheritances as well as the potential of museums to be sites for inclusion, justice, accessibility, and anti-racist action. Research Theme: Democracy, Values, Governance, and Freedom of Expression

Art, Ecology, and other Earthly Matters (Spring 2021)

Asma Kazmi (Art Practice)
Sugata Ray (History of Art; South and Southeast Asian Studies)
Sharad Chari (Geography)

Art, Ecology and other Earthly Matters is an interdisciplinary seminar that brings into focus diverse ecological and geographic perspectives intentionally cutting across race, gender, class, sexuality and region. Key ecological concepts such as energy, waste, sustainability, environmental justice, and conservation are considered alongside economic, political, religious, engineering, artists and scientific experiments with the ecosystem, and by rethinking in the most capacious way possible the notions of the animal, the oceanic, the urban, and the ethereal. For graduate students, this will be novel course for thinking about earthly and ecological issues with all their senses, or with both sides of the brain, linking artistic fabrication with critical analysis. Research Theme: Environmental Change, Sustainability, and Justice

Law and Humanities (Spring 2021)

Marianne Constable (Rhetoric)
Bryan Wagner (English)
Leti Volpp (Law)

The “classical” school of U.S. legal scholarship considered law to be a formal science. The law developed over time through adjudication by neutral judges. Law was autonomous—or at least relatively autonomous—from society. It set its own rules and therefore needed to be understood on its own terms. This approach has been modified in response to various critical attacks, but it still shapes the predominant conventional understanding of law. This seminar, in contrast, treats the law not as a rational and self-regulating domain that exists apart from society but instead as a force that is refracted throughout society often revealing itself most powerfully in realms where it is supposed to be absent. By looking to poetry and theater, painting and photography, folklore and popular culture, this course explores questions that are indisputably central to both law and humanities—including fundamental questions of who we are, what to do, and how we know. Research Theme: Democracy, Values, Governance, and Freedom of Expression

The Human Experience within Art, Technology, and Data (Fall 2021)

Lisa Wymore (Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies)
Lee Fleming (Industrial Engineering and Operational Research)
Greg Niemeyer (Art Practice; Berkeley Center for New Media)

What role will the arts and humanities play in the future of our technologically driven world? What does data feel like, how does it touch us, and how do we touch it? Who is influencing our machines with regard to how they see and understand the human experience? Are mediated bodies limited or expanded by technology? This seminar will focus on the project of synthesizing the interdisciplinary fields of visual art, performance, music, digital technologies, applied data science, and critical studies in the humanities to create new opportunities for innovators interested in a post-anthropocentric and a socially and environmentally balanced future. We hope to unearth key questions, resources, and future programmatic formats that develop practical and professional opportunities for humanists, artists, and technologists interested in innovating with technology together. After experiencing shared readings, the course will explore case studies with guests from professional industries, non-profits, and other cultural institutions. The semester concludes with collaborative projects that further develop themes addressed over the semester and will incorporate the expertise of the class participants. Research Theme: Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Tres Hornos: Earthen Ovens and Foodways of the Southwest (Spring 2022)

Jun Sunseri (Anthropology)
Ronald Rael (Architecture)
Stephanie Syjuco (Art Practice)

This collaborative research seminar centers on the design, construction, sustainable use, and experimental variables in archaeological feature visibility of a broadly used food technology, earthen ovens. Known as the horno in the US Southwest, this colonial introduction is the focus of our seminar, experimenting with construction techniques and using them to cook a variety of indigenous and introduced foods. Collaboratively-built hornos will be touchstones for exploring how cultural and historical tradition intersects with contemporary practice via 3D clay fabrication techniques and through the creative lens of installation, land art, and social practice. An attached small-scale garden project will provide a physical connection to ethnobotanical histories. Through this class students will explore how the friction between empire and indigeneity can create both anxious and productive outcomes. Seminar participants will also participate in hands-on experiences building and cooking and examination of archaeological artifacts, among other learning modalities, to think about how colonial food practices shape(ed) contemporary ways of making, cooking, growing, and community building. Research Theme: Environmental Change, Sustainability, and Justice