

Humanities (HUMN)

HUMN 103 Experience, Expression, and Exchange in Western Culture: Texts and Contexts of the Ancient World (4)

This interdisciplinary course explores significant issues in Greco-Roman culture as well as the religious traditions of the Near East. It provides a critical introduction to cultural contexts and ideological tensions that have contributed to the construction of Western identities and civilizations. Through examination of selected textual and intellectual echoes over time, the course considers the changing reception and impact of controversies and debates that have not only shaped ideas of “the West” but continue to challenge and perplex human beings.

HUMN 104 Experience, Expression, and Exchange: Texts and Contexts of the Medieval to Early Modern Worlds (4)

This interdisciplinary study emphasizes critical engagement with the idea of “the West” through an examination of the cultural practices, institutions, influences, and legacies of the medieval and early modern worlds. Pilgrimage, the Crusades, encounters with the “New World,” the Reformation, the Renaissance, the development of vernacular literatures, and changes in visual culture, artifacts, and the built environment are among the significant focal points of the course. Prior study in HUMN 103 strongly recommended.

HUMN 203 Experience, Expression, and Exchange: Manifestos, Movements, and Terrorism (4)

What prompts the composition of manifestos--and what consequences have ensued? What are the underlying purposes of terrorism, and how have acts of terror been defined and even justified? This interdisciplinary course explores intellectual and social movements in cultural context from the early modern period to the present day with attention to the writings (especially manifestos) and outcomes (including terror) they have produced. Using the French Revolution, humanism and technologism, imperialism, and the artistic movements of the early twentieth century as some central focal points, the course examines competing visions of progress and resistance to it.

HUMN 204 Experience, Expression, and Exchange: Utopias and Dystopias (4)

This course explores how utopian, dystopian, and post-apocalyptic discourse imaginatively engages--and has engaged--cultural and historical challenges. Using approaches related to history, philosophy, literature, political theory, and the visual arts--especially film--this class seeks to ground utopian and dystopian speculation in the historical and cultural circumstances engendering it. Possible texts include works by Rousseau, More, Plato, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Leibniz, Voltaire, Huxley, Orwell, Zamyatin, McCarthy, Burgess, Atwood, Ishiguro, Lovecraft, Fritz Lang, and Ridley Scott.

HUMN 207 Experience, Expression, and Exchange: The Great War and the Emergence of Modern Memory (4)

This course explores how movements in art, music, politics, history, and literature reflect, negotiate, and contribute to a modernist conception of the human experience preceding, during, and immediately after World War I--the “war to end all wars.” Using critical approaches related to music, history, philosophy, literature, political theory, and the visual and plastic arts, this course seeks to make sense of the cultural circumstances associated with the expansion of imperialism and its implosion.

HUMN 210 Modern Intellectual Traditions (4)

This course offers a focused survey of major figures and topics in the intellectual, political, or ideological trends of the modern period, from the 17th century to the modern day.

HUMN 214 Experience, Expression, and Exchange: Histories of Science, Vision, and Art: 1500-Present (4)

This course focuses on the histories of relations between visual art and contemporary scientific method(s). It looks at why and how major socio-economic, cultural, and political changes associated with the history of “the West” (c. 1500 to the present), involved a preoccupation with vision and its effects. The course hones in on artists and “scientific observers”, many of whom were directly involved in colonial and commercial projects. Topics of focus include: the uses of instruments (such as the microscope) for mediating sight and producing new knowledge about nature: the ordering, politics, and display of visual objects in collections, and more.

HUMN 225 The Nobel Prize (4)

The Nobel Prize is widely considered the most highly reputable award in the fields of literature, medicine, physics, chemistry, peace, and economics. This course considers the history of the awards, the Nobel Foundation, and the selection process. Primary emphasis centers on particular awards and the impact they have had in their fields and in the world. Topics vary from offering to offering.

HUMN 233 Investigating Identity (4)

The contemporary understanding of the self as overlapping and intersecting social identities may not be true. This course questions assumptions about identity by tracing constructions of the self through textual and visual material. Students investigate texts, works of art, and other lens-based media such as autobiography, memoir, portraiture, and self-portraiture.

HUMN 250 Special Topics (4)

This course focuses on special topics in the humanities not already covered in existing courses in the program. May be repeated twice when topic differs.

HUMN 380 Junior Seminar (4)

Students use methodologies gleaned from previous humanities courses--and acquire new ones--to approach topics relevant to contemporary study of the humanities. The course focuses on a set of interrelated themes, such as justice and power, faith and reason, or journey and exploration. *Prerequisite: HUMN 103, HUMN 104, and two 200-level humanities courses.*