Humanities (HUMN)

HUMN 103 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 Texts and Contexts of the Medieval World (4)
As an interdisciplinary study, this course investigates how the medieval world made sense of itself. It explores material from across the Middle Ages, including literature, art, architecture, and theology, and considers how different literacies (or modes of interpretation and understanding), developed during this time period. Focusing on several different areas of the medieval experience will help participants to gain insights into larger questions that stretch out from the medieval period to today.

HUMN 105 Texts and Contexts of Early Modern World (4)
As a critical introduction to cultural contexts and ideological tensions of the early modern world, this course examines significant focal points of the era from interdisciplinary perspectives that draw together and intersect literature, the arts, philosophy, and politics - and the discourses that have come to be associated with these areas of inquiry. Among the course's central topics are the recovery and dissemination of classical learning, the advent of printing, the roots of religious strife, encounters in and beyond the Americas, the emergence of experimental science, and the development of the secular state.

HUMN 106 Texts and Contexts of the Modern World (4)
As a critical introduction to cultural contexts and ideological tensions in the modern world, this interdisciplinary course examines the intersections of literature, the arts, philosophy, and politics to investigate what it means to be modern and how the modern era has reshaped and redefined the human experience. The course will compare literary, visual, and aural texts from different global traditions to de-link the concept of the modern from “the West” in its investigation of how societies have negotiated, registered, and expressed the experience of modernity.

HUMN 203 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 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 205 Reading the Labyrinth (4)
The labyrinth is both a built environment and a conceptual space. Class lectures and assignments will interrogate the labyrinth as a pervasive structure and narrative device from antiquity to the present through its various manifestations and representations. Adopting a global perspective, this interdisciplinary class will address the labyrinth in different cultures through literature, architecture, the visual arts, film and contemporary media. A main thread for the course will be the work of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, and the connections it proposes between the labyrinth and multiple philosophical and artistic traditions.

HUMN 206 Italian Futurism and the Aesthetics of Modernity (4)
This course explores Futurism, an avant-garde movement that developed in Italy in the early twentieth century. The course covers examples from multiple mediums (painting, sculpture, literature, architecture, urban design, dance, fashion, music, and cooking) to study how Futurism proposed to fashion a way of life and not solely an artistic idiom. Analyzing the numerous Futurist manifestos, this course investigates the movement’s programmatic approach to art and its position in the general artistic ferment that characterized Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.

HUMN 208 What is Nature? (4)
Explore the intersection of the sciences and the humanities by learning how multiple disciplines answer the question, “What is nature?” Students will specifically consider the role of the body, mind, and spirit in nature, the latter from both western and non-western perspectives. Special emphasis is placed on examining the role that race has historically had in regard to U.S. indigenous populations and the role that it plays today regarding wilderness access and cultural notions. *Prerequisite: Open only to students admitted to the Lake Tahoe Semester program..*

HUMN 210 People, Culture, and Society in the Middle East and North Africa (4)
This course introduces students to the diverse peoples, societies, and cultural practices associated with the Middle East North Africa (MENA). Course content is grounded in written and visual sources from anthropology but also draws on historical research, investigative journalism, documentary film, and popular media. Using these materials, the class explores several topics that have been of enduring interest to anthropologists of–and from–the region: religious practices and daily life, gender identities and sexualities, political power and resistance, and the formation of diasporic communities. Coverage of these topics also considers the conditions of knowledge production about the region and its political, social and cultural implications.

HUMN 215 Introduction to Digital Humanities through Post-Soviet Identity and America's South (4)
This course is designed to give students an introduction to digital humanities. It will include content from two cultural-historical periods: organized around American slavery studies and reconciliation, and diaspora and post-Soviet identity, which both touch on memory, identity, and reconciliation with the past, and lend themselves well to being studied through digital archives, digitalized memoire and letters, and digital maps. Within the comparative framework of the course, students will be introduced to digital mapping through skills and assignments connected to the Roberson Project on Slavery, Race, and Reconciliation. Students will draw from digital archives and the study of documentary film and digital display of montaged film from the Black Sea Networks Initiative.

HUMN 216 The Classics and the Colonial Americas (4)
The idea of “the classic” has long been important to humanistic learning. But what is a classic? And where does the notion originate that one should study literary classics? This course explores an important point of origin in the American founding, when it was popular to consult Greco-Roman authors for wisdom, imitate their forms, and contemplate Rome’s rise and fall as a cautionary tale of imperial hubris. Ancient texts–including the Iliad and the Aeneid–found fertile soil in the colonial Americas. The course samples these “classics” alongside works by new practitioners such as Aphra Behn, Phillis Wheatley, and Olaudah Equiano.

HUMN 217 Imitation, Quotation, Appropriation, and Genre (4)
Imitation, quotation and appropriation are fundamental creative strategies—in the visual arts, writing, music, and filmmaking. Imitation is how you learn your craft, quotation how you demonstrate expertise, and appropriation a strategy, often with political and legal implications. Forms of expression generated in one context and culture are translated and appropriated for new audiences and purposes. This course examines a diverse range of key monuments, texts, and practices, including the theorization of art in the Italian Renaissance, twentieth-century feminist retellings of "classic" tales, and the international exchange of plots and the formal language of storytelling between the Hollywood Western and Japanese samurai films. The course considers the pleasures and parameters of genre, the conception of intellectual property, and the politics of appropriation.

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 250 Special Topics (4)
This course focuses on special topics in the humanities not already covered in existing courses in the program. This course may be repeated twice for credit when the topic differs.

HUMN 380 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: Two courses in humanities (HUMN).*