First-Year Humanities Requirements

Entering first year students are required to take two terms of first-year humanities; that is, humanities courses numbered 60 or below in the Catalog. These classes introduce students to the basic issues in the four core disciplines of English, history, philosophy and visual culture. The only exception is students whose writing needs special attention (see *Writing and First-Year Humanities,* below).

Two terms of first-year humanities are required for graduation and are prerequisites for advanced humanities courses. The two first-year humanities courses may be taken in any two terms of the first year. To encourage breadth, students will have to take their two first-year humanities classes in different disciplines, the disciplines being English, history, philosophy and visual culture.

Below is a list of the first-year humanities courses offered first term. Because the courses have limited enrollments (in line with our policy of keeping classes small), and because the rest of your schedule imposes constraints, it may not be possible to register for your first preference, be prepared with alternate choices when registering.

Hum/H 1. The Classical and Medieval Worlds. This course will survey the evolution of Mediterranean and European civilization from antiquity through the end of the Middle Ages. It will emphasize the reading and discussion of primary sources, especially but not exclusively literary works, against the backdrop of the broad historical narrative of the periods. The readings will present students with the essential characteristics of various ancient and medieval societies and give students access to those societies' cultural assumptions and perceptions of change.

Hum/H 11. Love and Death: Using Demography to Study the History of Europe from 1700. Demographic events - births, marriages, deaths - have always been highly responsive to changes in the local environment. Decisions about when to marry, how many children to have, or what kind of household to live in have always been closely correlated to decisions people take in other areas of their lives and, as a result, can tell us a great deal about the economic, social, and cultural worlds people inhabit. This course examines differences in demographic trends in Europe across space and time, from 1700 to the present, as well as existing explanations for these differences, including political economic factors, social and cultural norms, biology and disease environments. Some topics include: the demographic effects of war, industrialization, and urbanization; changes related to the emergence of reliable contraceptive technologies; changes related to the expansion of economic opportunities for women; the effects of government policies on demographic decisions.

Hum/H/HPS 16. Visualizing the Heavens: Images and Instruments of Early Modern Astronomy. In Europe during the period from 1450-1650, there were several radical "revisions" of the universe. Nicolaus Copernicus proposed a sun-centered, rather than earth-centered, cosmos. Galileo Galilei turned his telescope towards the heavens and observed the Moon, Sun, and moons of Jupiter, and the voyages of discovery led to an expansion of the known world. At the same time, the innovation of the printing press played a crucial role in disseminating information and in allowing for astronomical printed images, including celestial atlases and maps, to reach a broad audience. Paintings of the heavens during this period are also a rich source of shifting astronomical ideas. In this course, we'll trace the role that images and instruments of astronomy played in both producing and reflecting these dramatic "revisions" of the universe. We'll study astronomical models, eclipse diagrams, almanacs, and printed instruments, alongside astrolabes, telescopes, and celestial globes, to uncover how images and instruments literally produced a new "vision" of a sun-centered universe for the early modern world.

Hum/En 24. The Scientific Imagination in English Literature. This course considers three periods of major scientific development-the Renaissance, the nineteenth century, and the modern period- to explore the influence new ideas, discoveries, and theories had on the imagination of English writers. We will look at the early modern interplay between magic and science, Romantic and Victorian debates about evolution, and the twentieth-century advent of modern physics as we confront consistent tropes like the mad scientist, the scientist-hero, and the problem of uncertainty. Authors covered may include Shakespeare, Marlowe, Bacon, Shelley, Darwin, Conan Doyle, Stevenson, Auden, McEwan, and Stoppard.

Hum/En 30. Reading Animals. In this course we will look closely at representations of nonhuman animals in literature from the Middle Ages to our present moment as opportunities to revisit definitions of, and the boundaries created and blurred between, the "human" and the "animal." Readings may include Marie de France, Marianne Moore, Franz Kafka, Donna Haraway, Donika Kelly, and K-Ming Chang amongst others.

Hum/En 35. Beginning with Poems. Why begin the study of literature with poems? Written words are the building blocks of literature, and poetry, in Coleridge's famous equation, is "the best words in the best order." To be understood and appreciated, poetry requires a close attention to words and their ordering as they are read and reread. All good literature requires such attention, but practically speaking, poetry provides the best way to acquire the art of rereading because of its shorter forms. More importantly, poetry can be the most emotionally intense and satisfying of literary forms. We will read a small number of poems written in English from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries from several genres - sonnet, ode, elegy, verse epistle, satire, villanelle - and on several subjects - love, death, and politics. Poets will include William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and William Butler Yeats.

Hum/En 36. American Literature and Culture. Studies of American aesthetics, genres, and ideas from the birth of the nation to the present. Students will be introduced to the techniques of formal analysis. We will consider what constitutes evidence in relation to texts and how to develop a persuasive interpretation. Topics may include Nature's Nation, slavery and its aftermath, individualism and the marketplace, the "New Woman," and the relation between word and image.

Hum/Pl 40. Right and Wrong. This course addresses questions such as: Where do our moral ideas come from? What justifies them? How should they guide our conduct, as individuals and as a society? What kind of person should one aspire to be? Topics the course may deal with include meta-ethical issues (e.g., What makes an action right or wrong? When is one morally responsible for one's actions? How should society be organized?) and normative questions (e.g., Is eating meat morally acceptable? What should we tolerate and why? What are society's obligations toward the poor?). In addition, the psychological and neural substrates of moral judgment and decision making may be explored. The course draws on a variety of sources, including selections from the great works of moral and political philosophy (e.g., Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics, Hobbes's Leviathan, Kant's Groundings for a Metaphysics of Morals, and Rawls's A Theory of Justice), contemporary discussions of particular moral issues, and the science of moral thought.

Hum/Pl 41. Knowledge and Reality. The theme of this course is the scope and limitations of rational belief and knowledge. Students will examine the nature of reality, the nature of the self, the nature of knowledge, and how we learn about the natural world. Students will be introduced to these issues through selections from some of the world's greatest philosophical works, including Descartes's *Meditations,* Pascal's *Pensées,* Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge,* and Kant's *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics.* A variety of more contemporary readings will also be assigned.

Hum/Pl 45. Ethics & AI. How do we reconcile the possibilities of modern machine learning with ethical and moral demands of fairness, accountability and transparency? This course will take a case study based approach to the challenges at the interface of algorithms and human values. By exploring existing debates

on algorithmic bias, explainable AI and data ownership, students will be exposed to the relevance of ethical systems of thought to modern social questions.

Hum/VC 50. Introduction to Film. This course examines the historical development of film as a popular art and entertainment medium from the 1880s to the present, with a focus on the American and European contexts. Students will learn how to watch a film-how to pay attention to significant visual details and to the ways films construct meaning from the language of images-and will develop the skills to write fluently about what they see. The course covers some of the most influential genres and movements from the earliest actuality films, through the French New Wave, to the Disney/Marvel Universe. Films covered may include short comedies from Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, "M", "It Happened One Night", "The Seven Samurai", "The Battle of Algiers", and "Black Panther".

Writing and First-Year Humanities

All first-year humanities classes include a substantial writing component. Before school begins, we conduct a writing placement test to determine whether a student must successfully complete an introductory writing class before taking a first-year humanities class. Introduction to Academic Writing (Wr 2) prepares students as academic writers across disciplines. It features frequent individual conferences with the instructor and ample opportunities to develop and revise assignments in response to feedback. The 9 units of Wr 2 counts towards the 36 unit additional HSS requirement. After the completion of Wr 2, some students may be asked to complete additional Wr coursework at the discretion of our faculty. Students will also need to complete the two required first-year humanities courses in subsequent terms.

Students who participate in the spring writing placement test in June will receive an email about their placement results in July.

Incoming students who do not participate in the June writing assessment will write a make-up essay in September. Information about the makeup writing assessment will be provided to students via email in September.