

## Graduate courses with a Renaissance / early modern focus offered in the spring of 2021

**REN-R 502 Topics in Renaissance Civilization (4 cr.)** will be taught by Olimpia Rosenthal and will meet with HISP-S 695 – Tuesday & Thursday 9:45-11:00am, in Cedar Hall Union Street Center (AC) C103

TOPIC: *Race, Biopolitics & Colonialism*

This course explores how Europe's colonization of the Americas influenced the emergence and consolidation of systems of racialization. It considers how life's politicization, at the regulatory level of populations, was tied to processes of racialization, and what this implies for thinking about how women's reproductive capacities have been historically regulated. It examines these questions by considering textual and visual narratives from the early modern period, as well as historical studies that help contextualize key legal debates, including over the enslavement of diverse indigenous, African, and Asian groups. Among other primary texts, we will read European narratives by Girolamo Benzoni, Christopher Columbus, Bartolome de las Casas, Francis Fletcher, Jean de Lery, Anotonio Pigafetta and Amerigo Vespucci, as well as indigenous accounts of colonization like those of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala and Fernando de Alva Ixtlixochitl. We will also consider visual representations of the "New World," including in maps and by artists like Albert Eckhout and Theodore De Bry. The discussions and analyses will be grounded by historical and secondary sources and will be framed around broader discussions concerning contemporary theories of racialization and biopolitics, including by Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Achille Mbembe, Daniel Nemser, María Elena Martínez, and Jennifer Morgan.

### ART HISTORY

ARTH-A 635 Problems in Italian Art of the 17th Century: Diego Velázquez  
Taught by Giles Knox  
Tuesdays 3:00-6:00pm, in Sycamore 037

### FRENCH AND ITALIAN

FRIT-F 513 The Rabelais Seminar  
Taught by Eric MacPhail  
Tuesdays 4:10-6:10pm, Library 851

Back by professorial demand, the Rabelais Seminar, last offered in Spring 1998, will study all five books of Rabelais' novel and their cultural contexts while reading Rabelais criticism as a paradigm of Renaissance studies. There is a lot to take stock of since '98: last year saw the publication of the new RSA/Brill Companion to Rabelais while in 2017 a team of French scholars launched the new journal *l'Année Rabelaisienne* to reinvigorate the field and reorient Rabelais studies toward one of the most prevalent trends in Renaissance studies, the History of the Book. The seminar is open to students of different disciplines who want to deepen their knowledge of the cultural crises and controversies of

the European Renaissance in the company of one of the most creative figures in all of world literature. Through an in-class presentation and a 15 to 20 page term paper, students will develop a research project in keeping with their own interests and expertise that relates to the world of Rabelais. We will also have a visit from one of the current editors of l'Année Rabelaisienne.

FRIT-F 523 Things to Do with Descartes  
Taught by Hall Bjørnstad  
Tuesdays 1:40-3:40pm, Sycamore Hall 103

For decades, the œuvre of René Descartes (1596-1650) was reduced to the birthplace of the *cogito* and the origin of a distinctly scientific mind/body dualism. To non-specialists, Descartes would mainly be known as author of a few widely circulated quotations and as a foil, if not the culprit, in stories about the emergence of the many evils of philosophical modernity. However, if the same non-specialists turned to the actual texts of Descartes, and even the most canonical ones like *Discourse on Method* or the *Meditations*, they would meet a thematic complexity, a layered historicity and a rhetorical density at odds with any easily recognizable version of “Cartesianism” (as being “clear and distinct,” a-historical and a-rhetorical). Descartes quite simply is much less Cartesian than most of his followers. But if his œuvre is not “Cartesian” in any straight-forward way, what are we to make of it? Indeed, what to do with Descartes? We are still in the midst of a vibrant reassessment and reorientation, through which the scholarship is catching up with what any reader has known was there all along but without the proper tools to start making sense of it. Therefore, this is a propitious moment for a theoretically-informed graduate seminar on Descartes. We will explore a wide selection of texts from Descartes’ body of work (from *Discourse on Method* and the *Meditations*, via his treatise on the passions and selections from the posthumously published *Le Monde*, to his very un-Cartesian dreams), while taking stock of recent developments in the scholarship (including Cartesian poetics, passivity, politics, make-believe, folly, crafts, theater, theology and robotics) and looking ahead to still further “Things to do with Descartes.” All readings will be available in English and French, and participants will be encouraged to develop final projects that explore Cartesian “things” at the intersection with their own research interest.

## ENGLISH

ENG-L 626 Milton and Cynical Utopias  
Taught by Linda Charnes  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 3-4:15pm, Ballantine Hall 018

In a way, Milton’s Lucifer and Eve are not that different in attitude from Thomas Paine. All challenge the rigid hierarchy of monarchy, and at certain points, for similar reasons.

Beginning with *Areopagitica*, this course will then concentrate on *Paradise Lost* as a fantasy of flawed utopias. Through exploring the contradictory logic systems in Milton’s massively influential work, we’ll try to connect it not only to what precedes it (the Interregnum) but also to what follows (the Restoration, during which a banished and blind Milton composed his epic poems). Our central questions will be: what constitutes ‘cynicism,’ and, can there be any such thing as a cynical utopia? If yes, does Milton contribute (perhaps inadvertently) to its intellectual conditions in the writing of his

contemporaries, such as Dryden, Rochester, and Aphra Behn, and later, Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft? Readings will include selections from Milton scholarship, writings on sovereignty and political psychology, Paine's Common Sense, and the Declaration of Independence.

Students will write two 10pp. exploratory papers, and actively participate in class discussions.

## HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE & MEDICINE

HPSC-X 506 Survey of History of Science up to 1750

Taught by Domenico Bertoloni Meli

Mondays 12:15-2:45pm, Luddy Hall 0002

This is an introductory course designed for all students with an interest in the history of the sciences and their cultural contexts. We will cover select topics from Greek to early modern science, emphasizing both primary sources and contemporary historiographical debates. The course will pay particular attention to a number of figures, including Plato and Aristotle, Vesalius, Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. We will include aspects of natural philosophy, astronomy, the medical disciplines, and the development of experiment. Students from a broad variety of backgrounds will be welcome and their varied expertise in the science, humanities, or languages will be valued highly.

*For this course to count toward the Renaissance Studies minor, you will need to choose a final project that covers materials from the Renaissance / early modern period.*

## SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

HISP-S 558 Conquest and Colonialism in Latin America

Taught by Kathleen Myers

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:45am, Cedar Hall Union Street Center (AC) C103

Colonialism in the Americas initiated social processes that persisted well beyond the three hundred years of Spanish rule, and that continue to affect contemporary Latin American politics, culture, and racialization. This course will begin with an examination of 16<sup>th</sup> century practices that reconfigured the use of space, resources, and people in support of the colonial project (2 weeks: Columbus, Cortés, Las Casas). We will then devote the remainder of the semester to exploring a variety of voices from the period that reflect racial and gender categories emerging out of initial colonial contact. First, we will view indigenous and mestizo documents from the colonial era, alongside 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural production (4 weeks: colonial codices, Sahagún, Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Guaman Poma; 20<sup>th</sup> century indigenous petitions, lienzos, and grassroots movements). Next, we will examine how secularization has limited our understanding of gender and the transmission of a Spanish female writing tradition to the Americas. Focusing on paradigms for inhabiting a Spanish religious space/role and how these are reconfigured by the “new world” reality of indigenous inhabitants and Afro-Hispanic slaves, we will read colonial texts and view contemporary films about some central figures (4 weeks: the Monja Alferéz, Sor Juana, Santa Teresa/María de San José, Juan Francisco Manzano and 20-21<sup>st</sup> century films). The final three weeks of the semester will be devoted to student projects, beginning with time for research and consultation with the professor and culminating with a student-run colloquium and final paper. Students studying for the MA exam may

substitute readings to help them prepare for exams. All students will be encouraged to bring in materials and interests from their own disciplines/areas of study for both class presentations and the final project, linking their own work with any of the themes, theories or time periods studied in class.

#### HISP-S 628: Early Modern Attitudes Toward Animals and the Environment

Taught by Steven Wagschal

Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00-4:15pm, Cedar Hall Union Street Center (AC) C103

As the Spanish spearheaded imperial expansion in the Americas, they left in their wake an increasingly decimated environment, one that did not go unnoticed by careful observers. Describing the scene of ships unloading their cargo near Seville's Torre de Oro, historian Gonzalo Argote de Molina, writing in the 1550s, estimated that some 200,000 cowhides were being brought back to Spain each year. These hides came from the innumerable mostly feral progeny of cows and bulls that had originally been imported along with other European farm animals to America by the Spaniards, and Argote noted that the demand for leather in Europe was much higher than the demand for meat in the Americas, such that, for the most part, the flesh was wasted and left to rot all over the countryside. A few decades later, Jesuit missionary José de Acosta provided an account of what happened to the excess flesh and how it had already led to an ecological disaster around Santo Domingo, causing infection and leading to a situation in which growing packs of feral dogs roamed like wolves. Sadly and presciently, royal chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo—like an early modern Cassandra—had already written about this type of ecological waste decades before Argote de Molina. Indeed, Oviedo noted that the Spanish should have known better because of earlier, similar missteps with the careless introduction of species in the Canary Islands. Now, in the thick of the Anthropocene, it still seems that interest in profits from commodities outweighs concern for non-human animals and their intertwined environments.

The case above is just one example. Early modern humans interacted with animals and impacted the environment in many ways. This course will look at historical and literary texts to analyze the complexities of early modern attitudes toward animals and their interrelated environments, in the theoretical contexts of Animal Studies and Environmental Studies, while also examining current trends and debates in Spain and Latin America on these issues in the twenty-first century.

#### HISP-S 695 Graduate Colloquium: Race, Biopolitics & Colonialism

Taught by Olimpia Rosenthal

Tuesday & Thursday 9:45-11:00am, in Cedar Hall Union Street Center (AC) C103

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