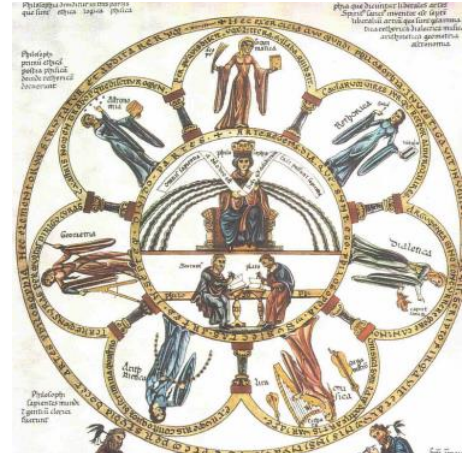




CULTURAL STUDIES



HISTORY



PHILOSOPHY

MATHEMATICS

CREATIVE ARTS



SOCIAL STUDIES



LITERATURE

MATHEMATICS



LITERATURE

SCIENCE



CREATIVE ARTS

SCIENCE



SOCIAL STUDIES

PHILOSOPHY



CULTURAL STUDIES



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PHILOSOPHY



CULTURAL STUDIES



**LIBERAL ARTS**  
**Fall 2020 Course Offerings**  
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## Shakespeare: The Tragedies

**Patrick Keppel**

William Shakespeare's tragedies feature astonishing figurative language, intriguing plots, complex, multi-faceted characters, and themes that speak to the core of human experience. This course will set the tragedies Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and King Lear in the social-political context of Elizabethan England and will examine the plays' major themes and patterns: the tragic characters' increasing isolation from identity and society, the complete divestiture of self and the inversion of order, the conspicuous waste of talent and feeling, and the glimpses of transformative understanding among the ruins. We will also examine the effect of the tragic 'process' upon audiences past and present and explore ways to make Shakespeare's sometimes difficult language come alive for today's audiences.



*"Within this wooden O": The Reconstructed Globe Theater in London (1997)*

## Theatre of the Absurd

**Patrick Keppel**

This course examines the innovative style of the Theatre of the Absurd, the culmination of the 20th century modernist eruption in European theatre and an influence on the nontonal languages of composers such as Feldman, Berio, and Glass. We will explore the Theatre of the Absurd's origins in mime and the silent films of Charlie Chaplin; verbal nonsense and the films of the Marx Brothers; the literature of surrealism, dream, and nightmare and the works of Franz Kafka; the Existentialist philosophy of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartres; and the theatrical theories of Antonin Artaud and Eugene Ionesco. Students will study the context, content, and structure of plays by Ionesco, Pinter, Genet, and Beckett and will have the opportunity to compose and perform original musical/theatrical responses to these plays.



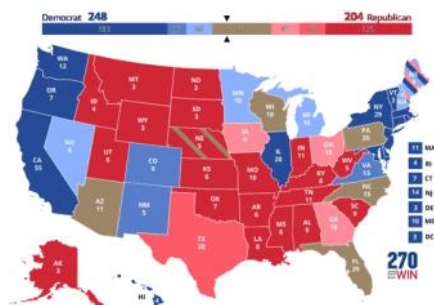


Vigée Le Brun, *Marie Antoinette in a Muslin Dress* (1783)

## Europe in the 18th Century

**James Klein**

Europe in the 18th Century explores the emergence of the modern Western world. Students will study the rise of a global economy, organized by a new order of European entrepreneurs, fed with new and exotic commodities, powered by both industrial machinery and the exploitation of African slaves. We will analyze the decline of traditional social orders in the face of rising nationalism, political revolution, and the horrors of modern mass war. But we will also discuss the new cultural and artistic sensibilities of 18th century Europe, focusing on such thinkers as Voltaire, Cesare Beccaria, and Adam Smith; such visual artists as William Hogarth, Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, and Jacques-Louis David; such writers as Pierre Beaumarchais, Friedrich Schiller, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; as well as such legendary icons as George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Giacomo Casanova.



## The Race for the Presidency

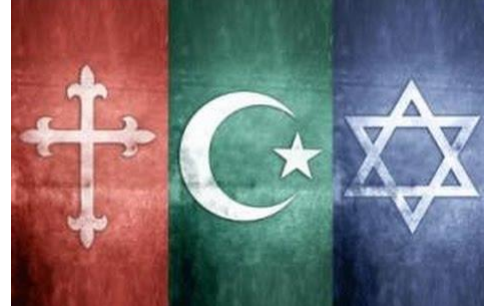
**James Klein**

Race for the Presidency, 2020 follows the progress of this year's campaign, setting it in the larger context of contemporary American politics. Students will have the opportunity not only to assess and discuss the role of political institutions, the media, financial organizations and grass roots movements in shaping the election, but also to consider the strategies and tactics pursued by both the Democratic and Republican candidates in their search for an electoral – and an Electoral College – majority.

## Western Religions

**Jacob Vance**

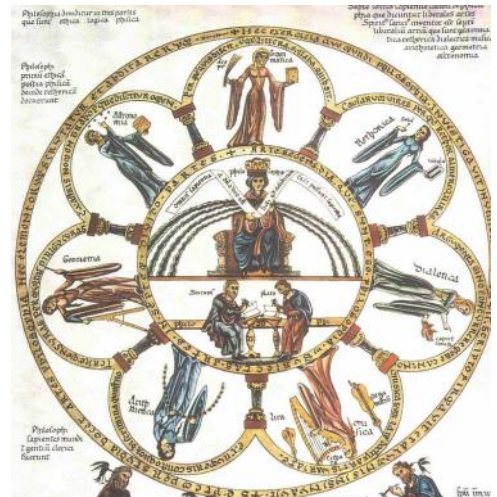
This introductory course in the academic study of religion overviews the religious beliefs and practices of three central religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The course covers basic methods in the academic study of religion and invites students to study a number of general questions: Why study religion? Why are humans religious? What are the fundamental concepts and practices of these traditions? What patterns can be observed across the major western religious traditions? The course examines the basic historical developments, significant texts, rituals, philosophical dimensions, and cultural expressions of these western religious traditions. It explores the beliefs and practices of these traditions from their beginnings to the present, as well as their central religious practices.



## History of Philosophy II

**Jacob Vance**

This introductory philosophy course focuses on the question of how we acquire knowledge. The course will survey the western philosophical tradition from the 16th to the 20th century. Modern European philosophy has traditionally been divided into two general groups: rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz) who argue that knowledge can be grounded on innate ideas of the human mind, and empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) who reject the theory of innate ideas and argue that knowledge is based ultimately on sensory experience. However, philosophers did not belong strictly to either one group or the other (rationalists or empiricists) in any simple way. Rather, the terms rationalism and empiricism can be understood as referring to two sides of a philosophical problem concerning how we know. We will study this philosophical problem in selections of texts by Montaigne, Descartes, Locke, Bayle, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, and Heidegger among others.





## BioCultures: Nature, Gender, and Sexuality

**Jill Gatlin**

This course examines three recent Cultural Studies trends: Green Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory. These fields investigate how nature, gender, and sexuality are “natural” and/or socially constructed, working toward more complex understandings of binaries including nature/culture, nature/nurture, and biological/cultural. In addition to asking what nature, gender, and sexuality are, we will explore what they mean in contemporary culture. How do our understandings of these terms affect our interactions with human and nonhuman others; our social structures and ecological values; and our sense of identity, performance of identity, and self-expression? What does it mean to live in an era of ecological crisis, celebrated and vilified genderbending, and polarized public discourse on sexuality? What are the implications of the ways we represent nature, gender, and sexuality in the arts and popular culture?



## Film Studies I

**Tracy Strauss**

This course explores critical perspectives for viewing films, examining the viewer’s engagement in the visual image, aural atmosphere, and narrative. We will examine how visual and aural elements of film work together to convey meaning and create their overall effect. How do lighting, camera angle, and frame composition work together? We will study narrative structure, character and conflict, camera movement and camera shots, lighting, editing techniques, as well as the use of sound and silence. We will also consider how music shapes our perception of the portrayal of a story on screen, and the variety of roles music plays in film. We’ll debate the music-scene relationship, whether music complements or contradicts the action or mood of what is happening visually. Possible genres of exploration include drama, the western, queer film musical, thriller, animation, and noir.

## Energy in the 21st Century

**Matthew Duveneck**

The near meltdown of Fukushima, the upheavals in the Middle East, the BP oil spill, and the looming reality of global warming have reminded all of us that nothing has more impact on our lives than the supply and demand for energy. The procurement of energy dominates our economy and foreign policy more than any other factor. But the “energy question” is more confusing, contentious, and complicated than ever before. We need to know if nuclear power will ever really be safe. We need to know if solar and wind power will ever really be viable. And we desperately need to know if the natural gas deposits in Pennsylvania are a windfall of historic proportions or a false alarm that will create more problems than solutions. Our goal will be to debunk misinformation while maintaining a positive tone, and develop energy expenditure calculations on the regional, national, and international levels that could enable us to make individual, societal, and national choices that would benefit the world at large.



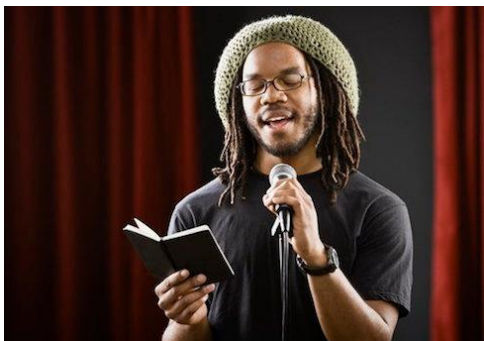
## Natural Disasters and Catastrophes

**Matthew Duveneck**

Although wildfire is a natural phenomenon (often started by lightning), it has devastating results, especially where humans intermix in the natural environment when fires occur. On the other hand, fires and other natural disasters can have rejuvenating effects on natural systems by reducing brush, restarting forest succession, cycling nutrients, and bringing new seeds to a flood plain. In this class, we will explore natural disasters as ‘disturbance regimes’, that is the temporal and spatial characteristics of a disturbance agent and the impact of that agent on a landscape. We will explore how humans react to the natural world and our disasters. Exponentially increasing population growth is causing more people to live in disaster prone regions, and this makes it important to see how loss of life can be avoided and damage to structures lessened. We will explore how disaster behavior and effects can be measured quantitatively, and will include some walking field trips from NEC during class time for some field activities.







## Poetry Workshop

### Ruth Lepson

In this course, students will read and write poetry, and discuss the poetry of classmates both in the workshop itself and in small groups outside class. As poet Robert Creeley points out, “Form is never more than an extension of content, and content is never more than an extension of form.” To that end, we will concentrate on the techniques of poetry, such as rhythm, repetition of many kinds, line breaks, pace, point of view, figurative language, imagery, juxtaposition, fixed forms and organic form. Students will also listen to poets reading their work online. We will read and talk about various sorts of contemporary poems. At the end of the term the class will give a poetry reading and produce a class booklet.



Scale Poster by Michael Bierut

## Fundamentals of Graphic Design

### Katya Popova

“A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.” — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

In this introductory course to Graphic Design, students will study the basic elements of Visual Language: shape, image, color, typography, and layout. Using successful examples from the history of Graphic Design, we will learn how to clearly communicate a message by creating work in different design genres, including logotype, posters, book/brochure, and websites. This course is designed to help both beginners and more experienced students learn the elements of self-promotion, from posters to websites.

**Matthew Duveneck** received a B.S. in Resource Conservation from the University of Montana, an M.S. in Forest Resources from the University of Massachusetts, and a Ph.D. in Environmental Science from Portland State University. Previously, he worked on the ground as a fire fighter and taught fire science at the Southern Maine Community College. More recently, he has worked at Harvard University/Harvard Forest as a research associate studying the interactions of climate change and land use on New England Forests. In addition, Matthew has vast experience and passion for social dance. In the classroom, Matthew aims to engage students to think critically and become active participants in understanding scientific methods and how components of our natural world connect with the ecosystem services they provide.

**Jill Gatlin** began teaching at NEC in 2008, after completing her PhD and teaching in the Department of English, the Program on the Environment, the Interdisciplinary Writing Program, and the Educational Opportunity Program at the University of Washington. Her teaching interests include interdisciplinary study of literature, art, and music, with particular emphases in American and minority literatures; theories of reading and empathy; romanticism, modernism and postmodernism; visual and literary landscapes; and cultural and environmental studies topics such as environmental justice, consumption and waste, race and nation, and gender and sexuality. She is dedicated to exploring the aesthetic pleasures, interpretive insights, and ethical prospects that may emerge from critically and creatively understanding and imagining the world through language and image. In the classroom, she aims to help students become confident critical thinkers, readers, writers, and speakers and to facilitate their discovery of the problems and possibilities of language, literary and visual texts, and cultural contexts. Gatlin has contributed to curriculum development projects including the Washington Center's *Curriculum for the Bioregion* and Colorado State University's *100 Views of Climate Change*.

**Patrick Keppel's** fiction has appeared in a number of literary journals; his story "A Vectorial History of Leroy Pippin" was read by Eli Wallach at Symphony Space in New York as part of NPR's Selected Shorts program. Patrick's plays have been presented at various venues in Boston and New York. His multimedia play about the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, *Triangle*, was performed at the Center for Performance Research in Brooklyn in March 2011, at the Sandglass Theater in Putney VT in June 2013, and at NEC in Brown Hall in January 2014 as part of the Music: Truth to Power festival.

**James A. Klein** [BA, BA, MA, AM, PhD] received Harvard University's Delancey Jay Award for outstanding work in Constitutional History and New England Conservatory's Louis and Adrienne Krasner Teaching Excellence Award.

**Ruth Lepson** has been poet-in-residence at NEC for 24 years and has often collaborated with musicians. Her recent book, *ask anyone*, comes with musical settings, by former NEC students, of some of the poems. It won the Philip Whalen Award from Chax Press. Her other books of poems are *Dreaming in Color*, *Morphology* (a collaboration with photographer Rusty Crump and including her own photographs), and *I Went Looking for You*. She edited the anthology *Poetry from Sojourner: A Feminist Anthology*. She has given many readings, including ones in St. Petersburg, Russia, Barcelona, on NPR's "All Things Considered," at the Woodberry Poetry Room at Harvard, and at MIT. She has taught at Northeastern, Boston College, The Kennedy School of Government, The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and at other colleges and universities in the area, in addition to giving poetry workshops for all grades through the Mass. Poets-in-the-schools program.

**Katya Popova** is a multidisciplinary artist, graphic designer and educator. She holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and MA from Boston University. As an artist, Popova works at the intersection of physical texture, shadow, and sound. Her works explore what could have been by tracing the physical gestures and material qualities of everyday things via performance, sonic art or immersive installation. She often collaborates with sound artists. As a graphic designer, Katya has twenty years of professional experience, working in major publishing houses (Random House, Houghton Mifflin), colleges (MIT, Columbia University), small design (Tank Design) on print and digital design. As an educator, Katya has taught design and visual art classes at major universities: RISD, Mass Art and others. Presently she teaches courses on visual art and design at NEC. To learn more about her projects please see: <https://popova.space> <https://www.popovadesign.com/>

**Tracy Strauss** has been on the liberal arts faculty at NEC since 2011. She has taught College Writing, Film I, and the liberal arts seminar, "The Roles of Music in Narrative Film." She also serves as a faculty tutor in the NEC Writing Center and was the 2017-2018 faculty advisor for NEC's liberal arts journal, *Hear, Here!* The 2015's Writers' Room of Boston Nonfiction Fellow, named by Bustle as one of eight women writers to follow, she's published essays in *Ms.*, *Glamour*, *Oprah Magazine*, *HuffPost*, *Writer's Digest Magazine*, *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*, and other publications, and recently published her first book of narrative nonfiction. She holds an MFA in film/screenwriting from Boston University.

**Jacob Vance** holds a B.A. in English Literature and Liberal Arts from Concordia University, an MA in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington, a DEA (or MA) in Early Modern European Culture and Civilization from the University of Geneva, and a PhD in Romance Languages and Literature from Johns Hopkins University.