



CULTURAL STUDIES



HISTORY

PHILOSOPHY

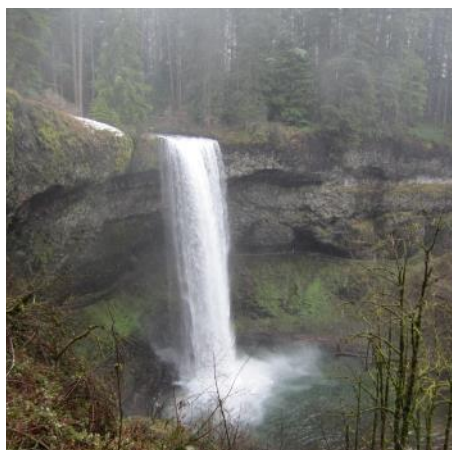


MATHEMATICS

CREATIVE ARTS



SOCIAL STUDIES



LITERATURE

MATHEMATICS



LITERATURE

SCIENCE



CREATIVE ARTS

SCIENCE

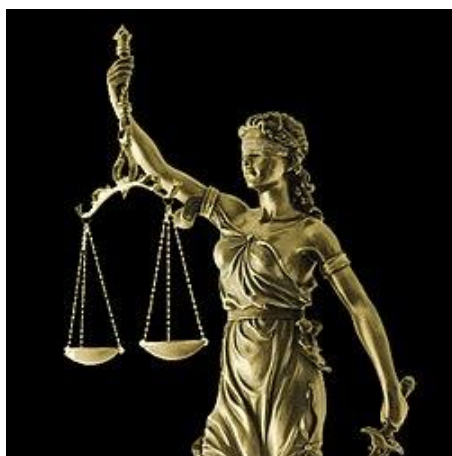


SOCIAL STUDIES

PHILOSOPHY



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# LIBERAL ARTS

## Spring 2021 Course Offerings

### Table of Contents

<b>Literature.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Shakespeare: The Comedies (Keppel)	
Contemporary Poetry (Lepson)	
Kafka (Keppel) (First Half)	
Beckett (Keppel) (Second Half)	
<b>History and Social Studies.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Europe in the 19th Century (Klein)	
The American Century (Klein)	
Advanced Seminar: Civil Rights: The Era that Transformed America (Klein)	
<b>Cultural Studies.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Modernism (Gatlin)	
Food for Thought: Representations of Food in Culture (Gatlin)	
Climate Change Arts and Culture (Gatlin)	
Ethics (Vance)	
Eastern Religions (Vance)	
Film Studies II (Strauss)	
<b>Science and Mathematics.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction to Botany and Plant Physiology (Duveneck)	
Watershed Hydrology: Understanding Water in the Environment (Duveneck)	
Climate Change Adaptation (Duveneck)	
<b>Creative Arts.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Visual Arts Studio (Popova)	
The Art of the Monologue (Keppel)	
<b>Faculty.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Shakespeare: The Comedies

**Patrick Keppel**

The works of William Shakespeare have inspired far more works of scholarship, as well as far more musical compositions, than any other English writer. His plays feature astonishing figurative language, intriguing plots, complex, multi-faceted characters, and themes that speak to the core of human experience. This class will explore the social, political, and theatrical contexts for Shakespeare's comedies and will examine the plays' linguistic complexities and major themes and patterns: the rigid (and potentially tragic) social order and the chaotic madness and magic of the natural world where these social norms are first confused and then reformed into a new more tolerant and regenerative order; the preoccupation with the imagination, as the waking world blurs with the dreamworld and "the play within the play" marks the generative relationship between Art and Life; misconceptions, disguises and confused identities, including gender identities; and the increasing interest in tragic-comic "romance" and musical elements. Students will have the opportunity to respond to Shakespeare's rich language and themes through performance, using music or other art forms.



## Contemporary Poetry

**Ruth Lepson**

This course will examine various styles, methods of writing, and groups of poets that have made contemporary poetry 'contemporary,' including the ways in which contemporary poetry records the workings of the mind and the ways it breaks down the hierarchies of language. As poet Robert Duncan says, "A poem is an event; it is not a record of the event." Reading and listening to the work of some of the most innovative poets of our time, we will think about their choices in syntax, placement of words, speaker, imagery and figurative language, levels of diction, point of view, and word choice, and listen for tone, sounds, line breaks, and rhythmic effects. We will consider ecopoetry, queer theory poetry, innovative women's poetry, conceptual poetry, poetry of disability, and Native American poetry, as well as poetry from other parts of the world.



*Diane Wakoski: "High and low culture come together in all Post Modern art, and American poetry is not excluded from this."*



## Kafka

**Patrick Keppel**

This 1-credit course examines the shorter works of Franz Kafka, whose intriguing body of work helped define the complex anxieties of life in modernity. After a discussion of the cultural and personal tensions that shaped Kafka the man and artist, the course will explore the characteristics of his unique literature of dream and parable—meticulously exact descriptions of nightmares and obsessions, the quiet desperation of sensitive human beings lost in a suddenly threatening world of conventions and routine. We will examine the stories' contemporary relevance—How does the world reduce people to insects and what is the antidote? Is injustice and even cruelty latent in any ordered society? But as Kafka's texts are always in some way about the creative process itself—the compulsion to write, the transcendent joy of writing, and the ultimate futility of writing—we will also explore Kafka's view of the relationship of the artist to the audience and social order he/she seeks to transcend, transform, or even subvert.



## Beckett

**Patrick Keppel**

This 1-credit course examines the short prose and plays of Samuel Beckett, whose intriguing body of work helped define the complex anxieties of life in modernity and was on the vanguard of postmodern artistic expression. After a discussion of the cultural and personal tensions that shaped Beckett the man and artist, the course will explore the characteristics of his unique theatrical response to the political upheaval of the postwar period as well as his connection to minimalist work in other genres. Students will also have an opportunity to respond to Beckett's work through original musical/theatrical creations.



## Europe in the 19th Century

**James Klein**

Europe in the 19th Century presents the cultural, social and political forces shaping the great age of European power – and of modernity. Students will investigate the critical political trends of the age: the triumph of capitalism; the growth of democracy; the rise of empires; the emergence of women into the public sphere. We will read, analyze, and discuss such critical thinkers as Marx, Darwin and Nietzsche, and explore the cultural accomplishments of such 19th century artists as Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Edouard Manet, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Henrik Ibsen.



## The American Century

**James Klein**

The American Century offers students a political, economic, and social insight into the crucial forces that have shaped present-day America. Through readings, discussion, and lectures, we will explore some of the major questions of American identity: issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. But we will also look at the political and social movements that have transformed the United States: the question of waging war (from World War I to Vietnam); the commitment to participatory democracy (from Progressivism to the Civil Rights Movement); the role of religion (from the early 20th century revivals of Billy Sunday to the modern mega-churches of suburban America); and the creation of a distinctly American culture (from 'The Wizard of Oz' to 'The Great Gatsby').



## Advanced Seminar: Civil Rights: The Era that Transformed America

**James Klein**

The Civil Rights Era explores the revolution in political, civil, and economic rights that transformed modern America. We will analyze and discuss the strategic choices that civil rights activists – lawyers, ministers, musicians, and students – made in the exciting, but dangerous, days of the movement. We will explore not only the politics, but also the larger cultural forces that helped to shape the campaign, and that were, in turn, shaped by them. We will look at the tactics behind the now legendary NAACP campaign for desegregation, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the wave of historically black college student sit-ins, and the Mississippi Freedom Rides. We will investigate how those campaigns resisted the forces of racial conservatism, ranging from mainstream American politics to the resurgent Ku Klux Klan. Finally, we will assess not only the successes and failures of that movement, but its influence on the politics of our own generation.





## Modernism

Jill Gatlin

“Make it new!” demanded modernist poet Ezra Pound. Responding to shattered truths, fractured moral standards, shifting social norms, and rapid technological changes, modernists endeavored not only to record cultural change but also to make a stylistic break from the past. This interdisciplinary course will focus on the “new” literary styles and statements of modernist writers such as Ezra Pound, H.D., Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, Langston Hughes, and William Faulkner. We will study not only “high modernism” but also the Harlem Renaissance and Proletarian movements. To contextualize and enrich our literary explorations, we will simultaneously study modernist innovations in music (atonality, serialism, jazz, blues) the visual arts (cubism, futurism, nonobjective art, expressionism, surrealism), and intellectual thought (psychology, physics, social sciences).



## Food for Thought: Representations of Food in Literature and Culture

Jill Gatlin

Although food is an essential element of daily life, fulfilling a basic biological need, we often ignore its many cultural meanings. Yet cultural commentary on food is all the rage these days, from television’s Food Network to more critical assessments of food production, distribution, and consumption in films such as Morgan Spurlock’s *Super Size Me*. This course examines the artistic, cultural, personal, and political significance of food on local and global scales. Through literature, critical essays, films, and personal observations, students will explore a menu of topics, including food as artistic inspiration; as entertainment, nourishment, and tradition; as object of desire and abhorrence; as tool of seduction and resistance; and as focal point in debates about health, disease, hunger, consumer culture, gender, race, class, nationality, colonization, social justice, genetic modification, and environmental degradation.



## Climate Change Arts and Culture

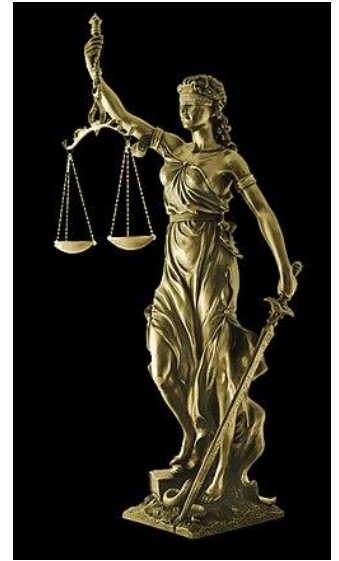
Jill Gatlin

Scientists agree that climate change is a real threat with human causes, but popular debates on the matter, and what to do about it, persist. This interdisciplinary course explores climate change culture: How do emotions, psychologies, and values shape perceptions of climate change? How have the media represented climate change? What ethical problems and local and global inequalities emerge as climates change? We’ll develop analytical, emotional, and aesthetic insights by examining scholarly studies, arts, literature, popular media, and other cultural phenomena, and we’ll consider possibilities for responding to climate change through daily practices, political activism, culture jamming, communication across opposing viewpoints, immersive enactments of climate change scenarios, and other creative works. Students will have the opportunity to pursue a creative or activist project (or traditional paper) at the end of the semester.

## Ethics

**Jacob Vance**

The course examines and engages with three philosophical views about how to morally evaluate actions and situations. These three views are utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue theory. The course approaches these three views by studying their most important works -- John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism, Kant's Ground for the Metaphysics of Morals, and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics -- from the point of view of contemporary philosophical debates and problems. What is the moral value of an action? Is it the intention or the consequence? What is the role of virtue in moral life? How can we conceive of character and friendship in connection with ethics? Can we prioritize duty over utility in deciding how to act? In asking these and other questions, the course invites students to engage in philosophical reasoning about complex ethical issues.



## Eastern Religions

**Jacob Vance**

This introductory course in the academic study of religion overviews the religious beliefs and practices of five central eastern traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Korean religions, and Japanese religions. The course covers basic methods in the academic study of religion, and it invites students to explore a number of general questions: What are the fundamental concepts and practices of these traditions? What patterns and differences can be observed across the major eastern religious traditions? In exploring these questions, the course examines the basic historical developments, significant texts, rituals, philosophical dimensions, cultural expressions, and central religious practices of these eastern religious traditions from their historical beginnings to the present.



## Film II

**Tracy Strauss**

As with Film I, we will examine the visual and aural techniques filmmakers use to convey story, but in Film II we will additionally study the genres of documentary, the experimental film, and the literary adaptation. Students should be proficient in the film terms taught in Film I and will be required to write substantial papers, deliver an oral presentation, and take a midterm exam.





## Introduction to Botany and Plant Physiology

**Matthew Duveneck**

Plants are the only living organisms on earth that can convert light energy into chemical energy, a process that forms the building blocks of life. The renowned naturalist John Muir wrote: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the universe.” Muir may well have been thinking about botany and plant physiology. In a general sense, botany is the science of plant life, and plant physiology specifically the branch of botany that explores how plants function. Topics include an in-depth exploration of photosynthesis, respiration, limits to growth, and the emerging science on plant hormones that allow plants to communicate. The course will be lecture-based with some field activity expected during class time.



## Watershed Hydrology: Understanding Water in the Environment

**Matthew Duveneck**

As early as 5000 years ago, engineers studied hydraulics along the Indus River in Pakistan, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia, the Hwang Ho River in China, and the Nile River in Egypt. They built dams, canals, levees, subterranean water conduits, and wells. Early Greek philosophers also understood the basics of the hydrologic cycle. Hydrologic information was vital to these civilizations, as it continues to be today. Indeed, the ability to understand and predict Hydrologic processes such as evaporation, transpiration (water movement through plants from roots to leaves), and precipitation is becoming increasingly important at continental and global scales. Broad scale changing land use (e.g., forest to agriculture) will affect the hydraulic cycle and climate of the region. With modern airborne remote sensing satellites, scientists are now moving from understanding the hydraulics at a point to the hydrology across landscapes or watersheds. Water quantity and quality is limited in many parts of the world; understanding how best to manage water and the watersheds that deliver that water is critical.

## Climate Change Adaptation

**Matthew Duveneck**

Under climate change, environmental resource management must accept new paradigms for continued delivery of ecosystem services, that is, the benefits people obtain from ecosystems (e.g., timber, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, clean water, and wildlife habitat). Restoring systems to a historical reference period may not be obtainable; therefore adaptive management may provide the best strategies to continue to provide ecosystem services under a changing climate. However, these strategies come with economic, philosophical, and ethical tradeoffs. Our perceptions about what is possible must adjust to keep up with the changing world. While some climate change management focused on *resistance* defined as the ability to keep a system unchanged, will be effective under some circumstances (e.g. building retaining walls to keep rising sea level out of a community), other strategies must accept that resistance may fail and that a strategy of *resilience* defined as the ability to recover easily would be more effective (e.g., building temporary structures designed to be easily replaced). Still, other strategies may focus on *transformation* defined as intentionally accommodating change (e.g., encourage new marine habitat on what was formally dry land). This course will focus on several adaptive management strategies and their relative tradeoffs.





## Visual Arts Studio

### Katya Popova

In this course students will be introduced to the fundamentals of freehand drawing, composition, and watercolor painting, as well as to intellectual risk-taking, which is inherent in the creative art process. The many platforms and mediums we will investigate include: working from observation and imagination; group critiques; digital and physical mediums; fast sketching and long term drawing; playful environment to consider elements of composition and improvisation, as well as concepts that grapple with today's world issues; working outside (en plein air)—a great way to connect to observational drawing and nature; online collaborations—a useful environment for performance based exercises, such as Toy Theater.



## The Art of the Monologue

### Patrick Keppel

A monologue is a story, and musicians and composers must be good storytellers too—through both their musical art and through the personality they present on stage. By telling stories we show vulnerability, gain strength, and give strength. We not only express our individuality, our unique experiences, but also celebrate our commonality with others. In this workshop-style course, students will have the opportunity to gain confidence in their public speaking skills through the study and performance of monologues from plays, film, or narrative fiction, as well as from the students' own imaginations and experiences. Students will learn the essentials of good storytelling, the various techniques of preparing a successful monologue, and specific ways to use emphasis and silence to improve their delivery.

**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** holds a B.A.M. in Music and B.A. English from the University of Colorado, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington, where she taught in the English Department and the Program on the Environment. She enjoys interdisciplinary study of literature, art, and music, with particular interests in cultural studies of nature, race, gender, and sexuality; American literature, minority literature, and environmental justice; romanticism, modernism and postmodernism; and visual and literary landscapes. 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.

**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 [Kenyon College], BA and MA [Oxford University], AM and PhD [Harvard University]) 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 liberal arts faculty at NEC since 2011. She teaches College Writing, liberal arts seminar, and Film Studies I and II. She also serves as a faculty tutor in the NEC Writing Center and she 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 with advice to follow, she's a local bestselling author who has published essays in such publications as *Oprah Magazine*, *Ms.*, *Glamour*, *HuffPost*, *Writer's Digest Magazine*, and *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*. She holds an MFA in film/screenwriting from Boston University.

**Jacob Vance** holds a Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures from The Johns Hopkins University, a D.E.A (equiv. M.A.) in Early Modern European Culture & Civilization from the University of Geneva, an M.A. in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington (Seattle), a B.A. in English Literature and Western Society and Culture from Concordia University (Montreal), and a DEC (Diplôme d'Études Collégiales) in Social Sciences from Marinopoulos College (Montreal).