



SCIENCE MATHEMATICS CULTURAL STUDIES CREATIVE ARTS HISTORY LITERATURE



**Liberal Arts  
Department**  
Fall 2024 Electives &  
Course Catalogue

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# Electives & Course Catalogue

## FALL 2024

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### FACULTY

# LITERATURE & CULTURAL STUDIES



## **Ethics and the Environment in American Literature** **Jill Gatlin**

How are environmental problems linked to social justice? How do writers engage audiences in cultural, political, and ethical debates and advocate for social change? This course looks at how social categories such as race, class, nationality, and gender shape diverse encounters with the environment, and how privilege shapes encounters with stories of injustice. Reading U.S. literature from industrialism to the present (including works by journalists, proletarian poets, nature writers, Harlem Renaissance poets, and contemporary Chicana, Chinese American, African American and Marshallese writers), we'll discover the unique ways that poets, playwrights, and fiction writers protest urban and workplace pollution or express feelings of vulnerability in nature while they examine what it means to be American. We'll also consider what literature can teach us about the world we inhabit, researching current events and taking a Roxbury "Toxic Tour" field trip with a local environmental justice organization. As we tackle difficult problems of injustice, we will look at writing and the arts more generally, including music, as powerful tools of protest, hope, and resistance, with opportunities for artistic/musical projects growing out of the materials.



## **British Literature Since the Romantic Era** James Klein

Over the past two hundred years, British authors have provided some of the most eloquent and thoughtful narratives of individualism, cultural change, and social development — and they have done so in the context of a rapidly modernizing world that has shaped our own. We will read, analyze, and discuss works that have made significant contributions to that literary tradition, ranging from the early Romantic ‘Lyrical Ballads’ of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the bleak, modern ‘Crow’ poems of Ted Hughes. The class will feature poems, plays and novels, with special attention to important works by Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and Doris Lessing.



## **Cinema's Search for Meaning: Ingmar Bergman's and His 'Faith Trilogy' Films** James Klein

Students will view, analyze, and discuss critical films by one of the greatest European directors of the 20th century: Ingmar Bergman. Focusing on his inquiry into the power of religious faith, and the challenge to that faith in modern age, we will study Bergman's central works: "The Seventh Seal," "Through a Glass Darkly," "Winter Light" and "The Silence". We will consider these films set against the works of such powerful European philosophers of faith and doubt as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoyevsky – philosophers whose writings helped shape Bergman's own thinking and his visual narratives.

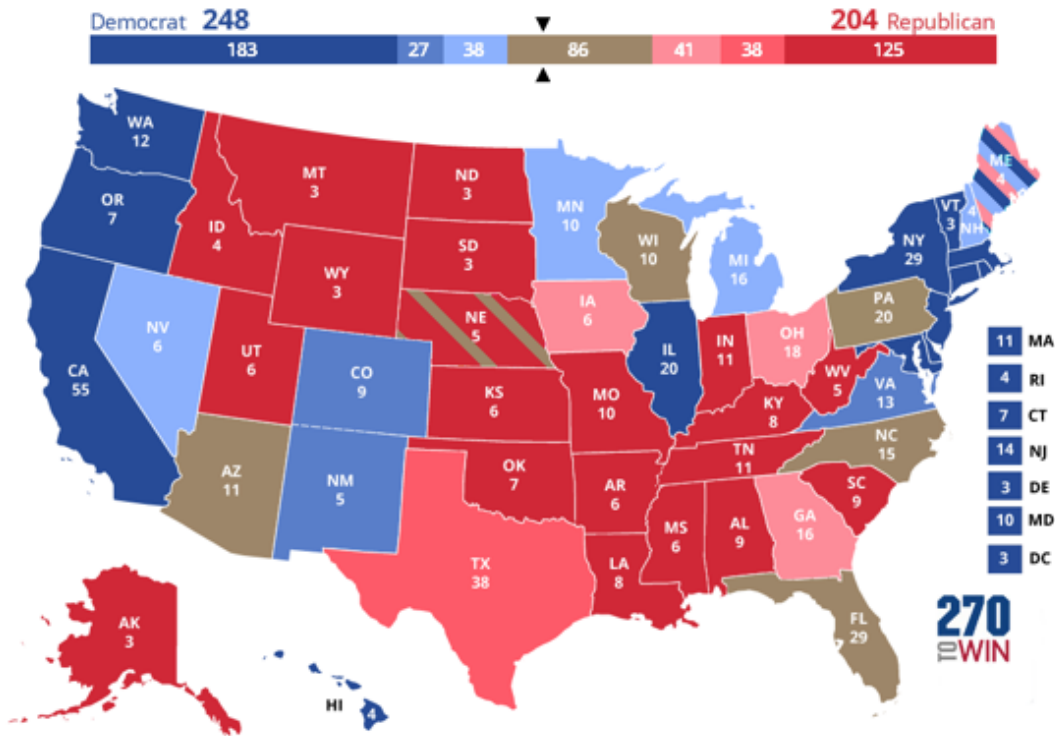


## History of Western Philosophy I

### Jacob Vance

This course surveys the history of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Plato and Aristotle, and its reception through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the early seventeenth century. The course first examines select ancient Greek philosophers and then their later assimilation and adaptation by medieval (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) philosophers. How did medieval thinkers (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) draw on ancient Greek philosophy in debating with each other about subjects such as the nature of virtue and knowledge, the nature of the good life? How do we acquire knowledge? What is the relation of faith to reason? After studying the reception of ancient philosophy in the Middle Ages, the course focuses on the history of Renaissance and early seventeenth-century philosophy, exploring how the Renaissance philosophical tradition contributed to the rise of modern western philosophy and scientific method.

# LITERATURE & CULTURAL STUDIES



## Race for the Presidency

James Klein

Race for the Presidency, 2024 follows the progress of this year's election setting President Biden's campaign against former President Donald Trump in the larger context contemporary American politics. Students will have the opportunity not only to assess and discuss the role of political institutions, the media, financial organizations and grassroots 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.

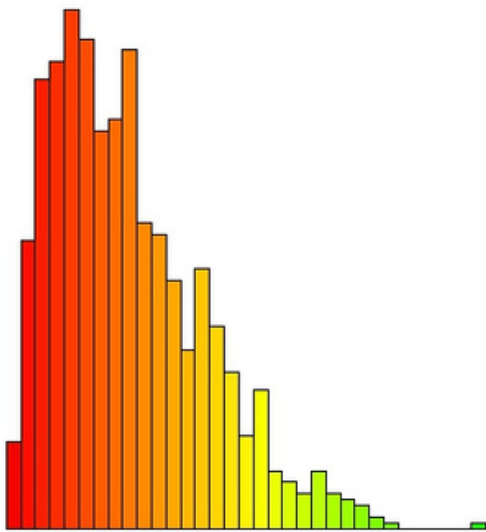




## **Forest Ecology**

**Matthew Duveneck**

This course will explore theories and principles of forest ecology as a framework for understanding forest ecosystems. Forest ecology considers forest succession as the change in species structure over time but also addresses disturbance dynamics such as wildfire, carbon and nitrogen dynamics, forest soils, and climate. These drivers operate together over long durations (the life span of the typical tree) to create the forests that are a defining feature of our biosphere. Students will explore these topics through class lectures by the instructor, reading and discussion, completion of hands-on exercises designed to provide experience with quantitative tools, and walking field trips. In addition, a requirement of this class will be to attend an all-day class field trip to a forest with transportation provided or to complete a self-guided tour of a forest requiring your own transportation.



## Introduction to Probability and Mathematical Modeling

Matthew Duveneck

What does it mean when you hear that scientists discovered “significant” differences during an experiment? How many samples are enough to adequately describe a pattern? How do multiple uncertain variables influence a system? In this class, students will learn the basic introduction to probability. Probability is the likelihood of an outcome that we are unsure of. We have an intuitive idea of what “You have a 30% chance of getting selected after an audition” means. This statement quantifies that probability or uncertainty because the world is full of variation. While variation can sometimes be predicted, understanding uncertainty and probability is a foundation to scientific understanding. To apply probability and uncertainty to real-world systems, students will build and run their own mathematical models of complex systems. Through this exercise, students will be able to quantify the uncertainty or influence of individual variables in a system. Students will use the free computing software and learning environment “R” to construct and run their mathematical models. As such, very basic programming in R will also be introduced.



## **The Art of the Monologue and Storytelling** 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.

# CREATIVE ARTS



## Three Dimensional Design Katya Popova

We will explore and articulate how compositional ideas can be brought into objecthood. Studio sessions will offer the time and space to construct ideas that generate object-making. Likewise, we'll structure objects in order to originate new ideas. In the studio and frequent sessions at the Museum of Fine Arts, we will continually question what sculpture can be. We will explore genres such as puppetry, video installation, and site-specific work and will confront issues of duration and place, narrative and abstraction. Cultural, socioeconomic, spiritual and psychological perspectives and motives will be critically considered as we encounter sculpture from prehistoric times and ancient civilizations right up to contemporary art practice. Ultimately, each student's personal contemporary practice will tackle perplexing arrangements of objects and unexpected spatial experiences.



## Matthew Duveneck

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 firefighter and taught fire science at the Southern Maine Community College. Matthew continues research with collaborators throughout North America including Harvard University/Harvard Forest where they study 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

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

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, Vermont, in June 2013, and at NEC in Brown Hall in January 2014 as part of the Music: Truth to Power festival. A version of *Triangle* will be produced by the Rock River Players at Williamsville Hall, Vermont, in May-June 2024.



## James A. Klein

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.



## Katya Popova

Katya Popova is a Boston-based artist, working at the intersection of painting, performance, and design. Katya received training in the fine arts in Moscow, Russia, before studying graphic design in the US. In addition to working as a graphic designer and illustrator, Katya has a background in physical theater and puppetry, often collaborating with sound artists. In the past ten years, she has presented her work at numerous street festivals, shows and galleries, participated in artist residencies, and worked on projects with the Bread and Puppet Theater. She also teaches courses on visual art, design, and performance at the New England Conservatory and other colleges in the Boston area.



## Jacob Vance

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 Marianopolis College (Montreal).