

CULTURAL STUDIES

LITERATURE

HISTORY

POLITICS

SCIENCE

MATHEMATICS

CREATIVE ARTS

LANGUAGE

LITERATURE

HISTORY

POLITICS

SCIENCE

MATHEMATICS

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LANGUAGE

Liberal Arts at NEC
Spring 2019 Course Catalog

LIBERAL ARTS

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Table of Contents

Cultural Studies.....2

Wilderness to Wasteland: American Landscape and Identity (Gatlin)

Postmodernism (Gatlin)

Consumer Culture: Stuff, Shopping, Self, and Society (Gatlin)

Art History (Popova)

Film Studies I (Strauss)

Literature.....4

The Tempest (Keppel) 1 credit, first half

Essentials in African American Literature I: Beloved (Klein) 1 credit, first half

Essentials in African American Literature II: Invisible Man (Klein) 1 credit, second half

Contemporary Drama (Keppel)

Contemporary Poetry (Lepson)

History and Social Studies.....6

Cultural Capital: Paris, 1848–1919 (Klein)

Wealth and Poverty: An Introduction to Economics (Klein)

Science and Mathematics.....7

Our Cosmic Origins (Duveneck)

Introduction to Probability and Mathematical Modeling (Duveneck)

Creative Arts.....8

Creative Writing (Keppel)

The Art of the Monologue (Keppel), 1 credit, second half

Social Dance (Duveneck)

Foreign Languages.....9

German II (Stovall)

French II (Zechory)

Italian II (Santovetti)

Faculty.....10

Wilderness to Wasteland: American Landscape and Identity

Jill Gatlin

Awe-inspiring, soothing, mysterious, terrifying, threatening, confining: how have different dwellers, colonizers, and travelers experienced and found meaning in the North American landscape? Exploring literature, painting, photography, and music, this course examines how landscapes have shaped cultural values, ways of living, and ideas about U.S. national identity since the 17th-century. We will consider popular conceptions of the American landscape—the virgin land, the wilderness, the frontier, the sublime, the pastoral, the wasteland, the urban jungle—and investigate their limitations. Attentive to race, ethnicity, gender, global economies, and diverse American experiences, we will ask: What is “Americanness”? How are place, nation, and identity related? How does the way we imagine the relationship between nationality, geography, and environment determine inclusion and exclusion? Which landscapes are seen as quintessentially American and which are denied or overlooked?

Postmodernism

Jill Gatlin

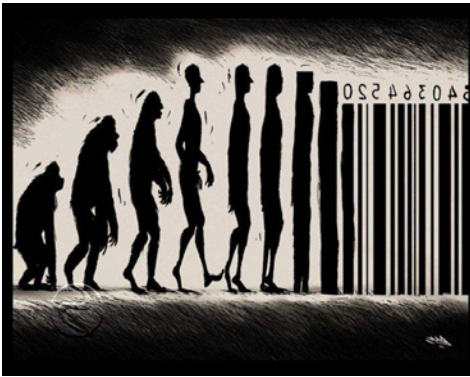
This interdisciplinary course will focus on the styles and statements of postmodernist writers, architects, artists, musicians, and filmmakers, considering how this era presents us simultaneously with dark, inescapable labyrinths—“modernism with the optimism taken out”—and outlets for formless, reckless joy—“the sheer pleasure of . . . invention.” We’ll enter these bleak mazes and find this creative delight as we tackle postmodernist theories about art and originality, knowledge and experience, identity and performance, technology and cyberpunk culture, late capitalism, and the loss of reality, drawing on Baudrillard, Jameson, Lyotard, Butler, Haraway, and others. Through these lenses, we’ll explore labyrinthine tales of Borges and Barth; stories questioning pleasure in dystopic hyperrealities, including Rushdie’s *At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers*, Cadigan’s *Rock On*, Vizenor’s *Feral Lasers*, and Scott’s film *Blade Runner*; experimental, minimalist, and electronic music; architectural pastiche, play, spectacle, irrationality, and allusion; and agglomeration, sublimity, appropriation, resistance, feminism, postcolonialism, and hybridity in the visual arts.



Albert Bierstadt, *Hetch Hetchy Canyon*, 1875 (Oil on canvas)



Francesco Clemente, *Inside, Outside* (1980)



Consumer Culture: Stuff, Shopping, Self, and Society

Jill Gatlin

Do you love shopping? Do you hate it? Are you addicted to new gadgets? Are you a freegan? Studies estimate that the average American sees thousands of advertisements every day, and most Americans make multiple purchases weekly, if not daily. Applying ideas from philosophy, cultural theory, anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, political science, economics, and environmental studies to popular culture and daily life, we'll explore consumerism as a source of happiness and depression, liberation and anxiety, bonding and anti-sociality, community and social injustice, creativity and conformity, subversive power and psychological manipulation, and survival and ecological degradation. We'll investigate producer, laborer, consumer, and citizen identities; competitive displays of taste and status; the commodification of objects, leisure, pleasure, and the arts; the economic and non-materialistic values placed on objects and experiences; the sensory and emotional appeals of sites of consumption (the mall, the internet); and culture jamming, resistance, and economic alternatives to consumer capitalism.



Art History

Katya Popova

Art History is a survey of visual art from ancient times to the present. The course introduces major art movements, monuments and themes, with an emphasis on the function of art in society, politics, technology, and commerce. We will discuss the notion of "art" and its origin, the idea of "the modern," as well as the role of nature and abstraction. Students will learn the tools and approaches for understanding and analyzing the language of the visual arts and how art affects us today. Using the basic terminology of the arts and the language of stylistic criticism, students will learn how to think, write, and speak critically about the arts and will explore the relationship of the arts to each other and to their historical contexts. They will also take part in field trips to local museums and learn how to curate exhibitions.



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.

The Tempest

(1 credit, first half)

Patrick Keppel

This 1-credit course is a critical and creative study of *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare's most lyrical and musical of plays. Not only does *The Tempest* represent Shakespeare's poignant farewell to his remarkable dramatic career, it is also highly original, one of the very few plays he wrote that is not an adaptation of a previous work or history. Students will explore the cultural and theatrical contexts and thematic ideas central to *The Tempest* and will have an opportunity to engage in creative responses to the play, performing scenes and/or setting scenes or songs to music.



Essentials in African American Literature I: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

(1 credit, first half)

James Klein

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is one of the rare modern classics in American Literature: highly praised, widely read and debated, the novel draws together the most traditional literary heritage of the past and our own modernist sensibilities. To better understand this complex and rewarding novel, we will analyze *Beloved* within the context of both 19th century American slave narratives (including the classic *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), and 20th century literary innovations in fiction. We will explore the many dimensions of Morrison's modern novel, focusing not only on its vision of American slavery, but also on its alignment of race, repression and the psychology of women, on its sense of emotional guilt and horror, and on its many meanings for today's readers.



Eldzier Cortor, *Still-Life: Past Revisited* [1973]



Essentials in African American Literature II: Invisible Man

(1 credit, second half)

James Klein

'Ellison questions, and he analyzes, and he tends to get to the root of the problem. . . . A man like Ellison, who asks those basic questions and can't be bluffed into an emotional stance - he's not a black, he's an anomaly.'

- James Alan McPherson [first Black writer to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction]

Deeply disturbing, psychologically profound, radically political, and laugh-out-loud funny, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is not only one of the great works of American Literature, but one of the most powerful considerations of personal identity, race, and culture in our modern age. Together, we will read and discuss this crucial American novel from three perspectives: as a commentary on race and race relations from the Civil War to the 1940s; as an acute psychological study of the dual consciousness shaped by that history; and as a literary masterwork, part of a novelistic tradition reaching back to Dostoyevsky and beyond.



from *Clover* by Erik Ehn, La MaMa Theatre in New York, 2016

Contemporary Drama

Patrick Keppel

In this course we will explore the role of Contemporary Drama by viewing and discussing a variety of works currently being staged in Boston, including plays at major performance venues like the American Repertory Theatre and the Huntington Theater, pre-professional student productions at Boston University's black box theater space, and experimental works at the Boston Experimental Theater and by the Arlekin Players. We will begin by examining the purpose of drama in the contemporary period, citing central theoretical works that defined the changing approaches to theater throughout the 20th century, but most specifically since 1950. Then we will define the specific choices playwrights and directors make to tell their stories through scene, lighting, and sound design. We will try to see a variety of styles from naturalistic drama to multimedia plays to wildly experimental theatrical experiences. Students will also have the opportunity to create their own short theatrical presentations.



Painting by Jess (partner of poet Robert Duncan), "The Enamored Mage: Translation #6," 1965

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, and other poetics.

Cultural Capital: Paris, 1848–1919: Culture, Politics, and Society in the Belle Epoque

James Klein

Cultural Capital: Paris, 1848–1919: Culture, Politics, and Society in the Belle Epoque studies the life of Paris, the social, cultural, and artistic center of the 19th century European world. Whether reading Baudelaire and Zola, looking at works by Courbet, Manet, and Pissarro, listening to Stravinsky's *'Rite of Spring,'* or watching *'Trip to the Moon,'* we will examine the social, artistic, political and physical revolutions that transformed Paris – and that came to shape our ideas of the modern world. We will discuss the creation of a modern city from Paris's medieval warren of alleys and cul-de-sacs; the invention of modern political ideology arising on the heels of absconding French kings; the thunderclap of modern art descending on the staid French Academie. We will explore works by a new generation of musicians, writers, artists, thieves, and magicians who transformed the artifacts of Paris – the café, the boulevard, grand magasin, and *Exposition Universelle* - into universal symbols of their age – and our own.

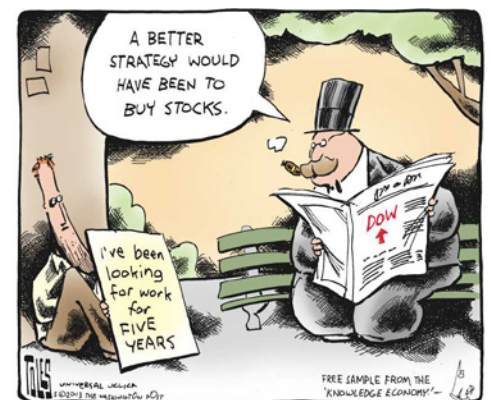


'Universal Exposition, 1889'

Wealth and Poverty: An Introduction to Economics

James Klein

We read about the issues every day: globalization; the housing crisis; inflation and unemployment; the environment; energy and its costs; financial leverage; income inequality; national, corporate, personal and – for most of us – even student debt. What does it all mean? How can we come to understand personal, social and national economic issues in ways that help us to make crucial decisions about our individual, our national, even our global future? In the *Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, we will look at our own individual financial challenges as a way of better appreciating the larger economic challenges facing society today, exploring those challenges as a way of better understanding the theories – and the realities – of modern economics.

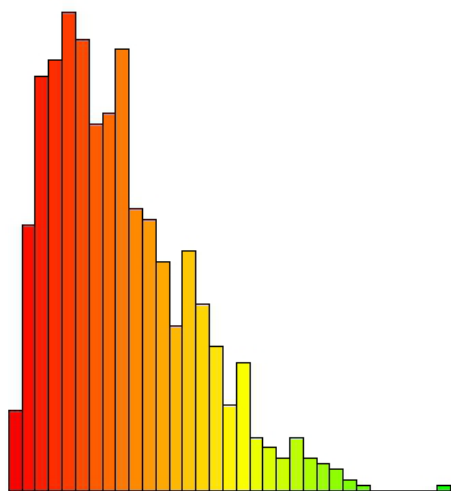




Our Cosmic Origins

Matthew Duveneck

This course tells the story of how we got here, beginning with a single event in the depths of space and ending with an understanding of Earth in its broadest context, as well as a greater appreciation of its rare ability to sustain life over geologic time. Students will be exposed to an account of how Earth was assembled from the remnants of stars. This semester, we will trace the rich history of the Universe, from the Big Bang to the creation of atoms and molecules, from the formation of stars and planets to the emergence of life on Earth. This interdisciplinary class integrates cosmology, astronomy, geology, biochemistry, and biology to create a unique look at the complex story of the Universe. Through the semester, we will chronicle how the first light atoms formed stars and how heavier atoms were cooked in stars and scattered in space, creating dust grains and organic molecules. This course will appeal to any student who has ever looked at the sky and wondered how we got here.



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.

Creative Writing

Patrick Keppel

In the Creative Writing workshop, students explore the various ways to create a successful short memoir, story, or ten-minute play by understanding how to use point of view, concrete details, figurative language, plot, character, motivations, conflict, and dialogue. The workshop will discuss two or three original student works per class in a supportive, challenging environment where every member of the workshop's personal exposures and risks are treated with respect and appreciation.



The Art of the Monologue

(1 credit, second half)

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.



Social Dance

Matthew Duveneck

Social dance can be defined as movement arts where sociability and socializing are a primary focus of the dance. In this workshop style class, students will get an introduction to partnering dances including Argentine tango, waltz, swing, and North American/English folk dances, all taught in a gender-free style (i.e., partnering roles will not be attached to gender). As Argentine tango represents one of the most challenging and exciting opportunities to explore partnering techniques, we will focus a large portion of the class on tango. To be an excellent social dancer, one must master five connections: to music, to self, to partner, to floor, and to community. We will focus on the deep connection between music and dance. Students will reflect on their own musicianship through dance. The course will be taught in a safe and respectful way; no previous experience is required. Personal physical contact between students will be expected. Although many components of the class will involve partnering, the entire class will work collaboratively as a community.





German II

Sia Liss Stovall

This course is the second part of the year-long course that teaches students the basics of German. Students will learn fundamental grammar and will practice speaking as well as listening, reading, and writing with the aid of controlled exercises. By the end of the year, students will be able to express themselves in the present, past, and future tenses and will possess a basic vocabulary. Correct pronunciation will be stressed. Students will be able to read uncomplicated texts in German with relative ease and will learn to write clearly structured German sentences.



engraving of the Arc de Triomphe, Paris

French II

Tali Zechory

This course is the second of two college-level introductory French courses. Students will practice and build upon basic vocabulary and grammatical structures developed in Beginning French I (Fall); through individual, small and large group work, students will continue to develop the four linguistic competencies – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – through exposure to and engagement with authentic multimedia artifacts (music, film, images, press) from the contemporary French-speaking world. Particular attention will be paid to grammar, speaking, and listening in order to develop communication skills and cultural literacies.



Roman Forum, Rome

Italian II

Francesca Santovetti

This course is the second part of the year-long course for beginners in the Italian language, designed for vocal performance music majors but open to all students. The linguistic and phonetic structure of the language will be explored through its application to the field of music, with particular attention to opera. Students will learn vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions that will enable them to understand and express themselves in a variety of situations in written and spoken Italian. We will address different aspects of Italian culture, and students will have the opportunity to speak Italian in every class. Students will learn the basic skills necessary to understand, speak, and write Italian at the advanced beginner level and will develop the competence, interest, and enthusiasm for a language that will inspire their careers in music.

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 Klein [BA, BA, MA, AM, PhD] has 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 20 years & has often collaborated with musicians. Her recent book, *ask anyone*, comes with musical settings, by former NEC students, of some of the poems. Her other books of poems are *Dreaming in Color*, *Morphology* (a collaboration with photographer Rusty Crump & including her own photographs), and *I Went Looking for You*. She edited the anthology *Poetry from Sojourner: A Feminist Anthology*. 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. Her poetry and prose have appeared in many periodicals, and she has given many readings in St. Petersburg, Russia, in Barcelona, Spain and on NPR. She organized poetry readings for Oxfam America. ruthlepson.com

Katya Popova is a multimedia artist-designer, who has been teaching Visual Art courses at the New England Conservatory since 2014. After coming from Moscow with a fine arts background, she graduated with a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and an MFA from Boston University. Katya has taught at Mass College of Art, the New England School of Design, Rhode Island School of Design, Boston Architectural College and other art schools. Katya's process is often informed by performance art and installation art. Her work is exhibited locally and internationally.

Francesca Santovetti received her Doctorate in English Literature from the University of Rome and her Ph.D. in Italian Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has taught at UCLA, Georgetown, the University of Michigan, and Mount Holyoke College. At NEC, she teaches Italian at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She has chaired the Task Force on Foreign Languages and is a member of the Foreign Language Center. The author, editor and translator of numerous books and articles on Italian literature, culture and film, she recently edited and wrote the introduction for *Modernitalia*, a collection of essays on Italian Modernism by Jeffrey T. Schnapp. Her awards include international scholarships, fellowships and grants. She holds a degree in Culinary Arts at the Academie d'Art Culinaire Cordon Bleu in Rome, likes to think of herself as an educated, trans-cultural, trans-lingual chef and she uses gastronomic recipes to help her students to learn the secrets of the 'imperativo' and the 'forma impersonale'.

Tracy Strauss has been liberal arts faculty at NEC since 2011. She has taught College Writing and the liberal arts seminar in "The Roles of Music in Narrative Film." 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 Writers' Room of Boston Nonfiction Fellow, named by *Bustle* as one of eight women writers with advice to follow, she's published essays in *Ms.*, *Glamour*, *HuffPost*, *Writer's Digest Magazine*, *War, Literature & The Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*, and other publications. She holds an MFA in film/ screenwriting from Boston University. Her first book is set to debut in May 2019.

Sia Liss Stovall has taught German both in Germany and in the US. She joined the faculty of NEC in 2005. Her main interests are European languages, music, art and architecture. Her passion for the music and Lieder of German/Austrian composers led her to her fascination with the German language. Teaching at NEC has offered her the marvelous opportunity of combining her love of language with her love of music. It is her goal that her students, upon completion of her German course, will be able to visit a German-speaking country and communicate freely and with joy.

Tali Zechory comes to NEC from Harvard University, where she has taught all levels of French language and culture classes, and developed and taught intermediate- and advanced-level courses. She has also taught French language and literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Tufts University. She holds a B.A. in Philosophy and French Literature from Northwestern University, and an A.M. in French Literature from Harvard University.

