

DLM 110 Section Descriptions

DLM 110a & c Happy Life (B. Weston)

How to live a happy life? Aristotle and modern social science agree that we can develop habits that make us happier – and reduce those habits that make us unhappy. We will study the scholarship on happiness, and learn to do practices that enhance our own self-care, improve our relations with other people, and develop the skills to work with others in a cause larger than ourselves. These are not only the keys to a happy life, but doing them also contributes to a happier society for everyone.

DLM 110b & d Race, Racism, Racialization (A. Hor)

It is common to hear the accusation that something or someone is “racist.” What does it mean to say something is “racist” and what should we do about it? More fundamentally, what even is “race” in the first place and how would we know it when we see it? In this course, we will unpack what is “race,” “racism,” and “racialization” in global historical context. So long as students come with an open mind, the class will also offer students a safe space to explore, break down, debate, and reflect on our different experiences with “race,” how to think about it, and what our responsibilities might be, at the individual and global levels.

DLM 110e Myth, Religion, and Superheroes (L. Jefferson)

Latent in mythology, biblical literature, philosophy and contemporary popular culture is the notion of the “hero.” Within these genres are some common threads: the hero is ascribed savior-like qualities, a god-human duality, and embodies the restoration of a positive world order. The messianic conception of a hero repeatedly falls into the realm of religion and quite frequently appears in a visual medium. This course will illustrate the genesis of the hero in religious traditions, discuss the divine hero’s appearance in material culture, examine the historical context of the hero in the comic book and graphic novel genre, and discuss the prominence of the hero in film. This course will ultimately examine what type of return to paradise the hero fulfills in religious and secular arenas and why this desire continually persists.

DLM 110f & g Good People: Ancient Contexts (P. White)

What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a good human? How does learning and thinking relate to virtue or goodness? How do various cultures figure or understand the most basic or defining relations between human beings? Do the answers to these questions differ by gender or social, political, or economic position? What are the ultimate human values or images of human goodness or virtue? This class will look at some ways these questions are raised and addressed in literary, philosophical, religious, and visual works from a selection of three ancient cultures. The three cultures chosen in a particular term will vary, but each term it may include cultures from ancient China, Greece, Rome, Mesopotamia, and India. Besides visual art from the three cultures, the class will study works or figures such as Gilgamesh, Homer, Sappho, Sophocles, Euripedes, the Bible, the Chinese Book of Songs, Tang Dynasty and earlier Chinese poetry, Virgil, Ovid, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita, Lotus Sutra, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mengzi, Xunzi, Seneca, Cicero, the Upanishads, Kalidasa, Jayadeva, Patanjali, and the Dhammapada.

DLM 110h & i Ghostly Girls: Women and Horror (A. Kundu)

Chills and thrills!—As a genre whose rise is simultaneous with the rise of industrialization, empire, and mass culture, contemporary horror continues to speak to the anxieties, fears, and desires of our world as we know it. It is a genre that has been especially preoccupied with both othering minority identities, like womanhood, and becoming a vessel for their creative expression. We will examine through time the creation, development and even death of a variety of horror tropes—the imprisoned woman, the monstrous family, the femme fatale—and analyze how they engage with contemporary ideas of femininity. Femininity in horror often involves exploring intersectional identities that combine race, gender, class, nationality etc. Ultimately, we will see how a genre with its origins in conservative fears about women, foreigners, and non-white people has been repurposed and made to speak for the minoritized and dispossessed by authors from these very groups.

DLM 110j & k Life and Death (A. Roche)

This course explores the themes of life and death in literature, law, and philosophy. Topics may include: What makes for a good life? Should one fear death—and if so, why? Does death make life meaningful? Is there life after death? Topics may also include the ethics of and law about abortion and euthanasia.

DLM 110k Shapeshifters: Literature of Transformation (H. Emmitt)

This course starts with fairy tale and myth and ends with realism. In it, we will study both literature that emphasizes transformation and the way that such literature can be transformed by being rewritten in another age, culture, or genre

DLM 110m What is a Human Being? (D. Hall)

This course raises the fundamental question of what it means to be a human. We address questions about human origins, the nature of minds, issues of embodiment (including problems associated with occupying racialized and genderized bodies), what it means to live a good life, and whether being human is all that great in the end (post-human and cyborg existence).

DLM 110n Adulting: Ways of Growing Up (J. Kinkade)

An exploration of what it means to come of age in different contexts, from classical to contemporary. The course will examine how the definition of adulthood develops in regard to gender, race, and nation, and how different genres represent the differences between childhood and adulthood, as well as what the threshold between looks like.

DLM 110q Kung Fu Panda & Chinese Thought (M. Inouye)

China has a long history of thinking about self-cultivation, and from early on developed intellectual, martial, and aesthetic techniques designed to facilitate it. This course looks at conceptions of the self in Chinese philosophical traditions (Confucian and Daoist) to explain what they are, how they differ among themselves, and how they could also complement one another within one cultural system. The decidedly secular orientation of these traditions is one of their distinctive traits. Aesthetic expression in the arts of music, calligraphy, and painting also emerged as important methods of self-definition and communication, especially of the affective side of the self, believed to transcend verbal expression. Distinctive characteristics of the arts in China are directly tied to the native perception of them as manifestations of the inner character of the artist. Taken together, these Chinese traditions constitute a coherent vision of education and selfhood, and one that both shares with and stands apart from those developed in other cultures.

DLM 110r Picasso's Guernica: Art, Pol, War (P. Haffner)

Considered his masterpiece, Pablo Picasso's monumental painting, Guernica, has been hailed for its capability of capturing and decrying the horrors of war. Painted as a response to the Spanish Civil War in 1937, Guernica was an immediate sensation that helped cement Picasso's status as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century and bring international attention to the war in Spain. Since then, Guernica has served as a lasting symbol of the costs of war, as well as the expressive potential of art. What has made the painting so compelling and how do we understand its significance today? In this course, students will enter the world of Guernica by exploring the art of Pablo Picasso and his contemporaries, the history of the Spanish Civil War and the world's response to it, the rise of fascism and authoritarianism in Europe, and the enduring life of Guernica as both a work of art and a reminder of humanity's most destructive tendencies.

DLM 110s Witches, Princes, and Priests (A. Tubb)

Discover how political and religious ideas transformed early modern Europe and created a new understanding of the roles of princes, witches, and priests in society. The transformation would ultimately lead to a new understanding of what it means to be human - an Enlightenment.

DLM 110t Drugs and Religious Experiences (B. Bae)

The following course explores the varieties of religious/mystical experiences with a particular emphasis on the use of psychoactive substances. The course will review and discuss phenomenological and scientific approaches; social movements; and various cultural perspectives to religious/mystical experiences and ways of being through substances and the formation of sacred knowledge. Lastly, the course will delve into ethical issues of appropriation, disenchantment, and re-enchantment as avenues of meaning and praxis that arise through an engagement with various substances and subsequent religious/mystical experiences.

DLM 110u Food and Culture (H. Chacón)

This class will focus on the roles food and its preparation play in cultural and identity formation, conservation and environmental concerns, nutrition and self-expression or self-presentation.

DLM 310 Section Descriptions

DLM 310a Breaking the Law (D. Hall)

When is it permissible to break a law? And on what foundations (if there are any) does legitimate law-breaking rest? This course addresses these questions drawing on three political-philosophical traditions – the civil disobedience tradition, radical revolutionary politics, and anarchism – each of which offers a particular understanding of law, its foundations, and principles for when legal authority should be defied.

DLM 310b A Time of Turmoil (R. Seebacher)

The artistic ventures from the time of the World Wars is particularly reflective of a globe in civic, cultural, and aesthetic turmoil. This class examines this prolific period for the arts by concentrating on the music, art, poetry, and associated political movements from the dawn of the 20th Century through 1950.

DLM 310c Asian America (S. Sippy)

This project-based, interdisciplinary course will explore the diversity of Asian America and how East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander communities have been shaped by and shape America. Through fiction, memoir, histories, film, television, material artifacts, and other sources, we will explore a wide range of Asian and Pacific Islander narratives. Students will work collaboratively on projects (oral histories, video-documentaries, podcasts, exhibitions, websites) that document API cultural, political, socioeconomic, and/or religious experiences in and about America.

DLM 310d Visual Literacy in the Age of AI (A. Frederick)

We live in a world saturated by images – from the screens with which we surround ourselves to computer-generated images to retinal projection – yet most of us struggle to interpret how we understand what we see. With the advent of AI, the intersections of history, memory, and truth represented in the form and content of an image are necessarily undergoing re-examination. Algorithms, central to the use of AI technologies, do not reflect reality automatically. Therefore, the role of images as a universal language in the digital age requires deep engagement with visual awareness. We will investigate and question our reliance on images as ways to understand the world at a time when the relationship between image and reality is imprecise and sometimes deceptive. This class approaches these issues on two fronts: First, we will trace contemporary visual technologies to their historical origins in multiple traditions of artistic practice. Second, students will work with visual technologies to analyze and produce a range of applied examples – from the development of 3-D images to virtual maps to short films.

DLM 310e Fixing Homelessness in Danville (D. Toth)

In this course, students will work to try help Danville devise ways to provide housing for residents experiencing homelessness. Students will research how other communities around the country have attempted to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness. They will work with local community organizations and the city government to devise and propose realistic ways to provide housing for people.

DLM 310f Belonging: Holocaust and Nakba (K. Bahr)

The Holocaust and the Nakba were very painful and traumatic events in Jewish and Palestinian history. Both events, which differ in nature and in degree, have had a decisive impact on the subsequent history, consciousness, and identities of the two peoples. The Holocaust has become a central component of Jewish identity, particularly since the late 1970s and the 1980s, in Israel and around the world. The Nakba and its persisting consequences have become a crucial part of Palestinian and Arab identities since 1948. The events of October 7th, 2023 have shown that Israel's right to defend itself is embedded in the notion of "Never Again" and connected with the struggle for Palestinian Liberation. In this class, students will immerse themselves in both discourses by learning how the Holocaust affected Jewish people and migration, how the Holocaust affected the land and people of Palestine before the founding of Israel and what ultimately led to the Nakba, and how today Israel's right-wing government uses a blueprint of the German Holocaust to maintain dominance in the region. Besides learning about the histories, students will also engage in social justice initiatives and collaborations between Israelis and Palestinians that have shaped both Israel and Palestine over the last decades.

DLM 310g Sources of Self and Modern Identity (D. Williams)

Is it possible to identify the complex, but largely unarticulated ensemble of factors that shape the idea of the self in the modern West? Who are you and how have your ideas about important life questions been formed? This interdisciplinary course uses the history of philosophy, politics, music, literature, and religion to retrieve the sources of the modern self focusing on the concepts of inwardness, political freedom, and our place in nature to create a map of modern identity.