

# College of the Humanities

## Topic Courses and Seminar Descriptions Fall 2026/Winter 2027

### Third Year Topic Courses

#### **CLCV 3000A:** *Intro to Digital Archaeology*

Shawn Graham

Fall 2026

Cross-listed with HIST 3000A

This course explores how digital tools can create or recover archaeological data, and how data-led approaches (including some statistics) lead us to understand and communicate archaeological knowledge and storytelling. Topics and activities will include hands-on 3d model building, looking at landscapes (satellite and lidar data), simulations of various kinds, archaeogaming, and public facing web-work. There may be a component working at a historic site with various digital tools and approaches.

#### **CLCV 3701A:** *Time Travel in Greek Epic and Tragedy*

Yukai Li

Winter 2027

Cross-listed with ENGL 3008A

While there is no actual time travel literature from Greek antiquity, contemporary science fiction in film and television has generated critical and philosophical concepts that let us describe and analyse new aspects of ancient literature. The fundamental theses of this course are, 1) that science fiction, and time travel stories in particular, challenge some of our most fundamental assumptions about narrative fiction, and 2) that ancient Greek epic and tragedy already contained narratives that resonate with science fiction, without literally being science fiction. We will mobilise the resources of both ancient and modern philosophy to see how the manipulation of time and memory in Homer and Greek tragedians produce literary perspectives that resonate with stories from Star Trek and films like *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

#### **DIGH 3700A:** *Topic TBA*

Instructor-TBA

Fall 2026

Cross-listed with SOCI 3210

\*\*This course is hosted by the Sociology dept\*\*

#### **DIGH 3704B:** *Cognitive Science and the Digital Humanities (specific title TBA)*

Instructor-Robert West

Winter 2027

Cross-listed with CGSC 3704 B

**\*\*This course is hosted by the Cognitive Science dept\*\***

Exploration of the roles of human and artificial cognition in the digital humanities. Topics may include virtual and augmented reality as applied to the humanities, cognitive issues in hypertext and hypermedia; linguistic and philosophical considerations in digital media, cognitive narratology, and artificial intelligence.

**RELI 3101A: *Gender, Sexuality and Religion***

Ash Geissinger

Fall 2026

This course examines some of the ways that several religious traditions and communities in contemporary North America construct gender and sexuality. It focuses on bodily practices and beliefs about human bodies, internal community debates about these, and their wider social and political impacts.

**RELI 3101B: *Judaism and the Body: Food, Sex and Death***

Deidre Butler

Fall 2026

An online, asynchronous 3000-level course exploring Jewish life, law, and practice through the body.

What can kosher bacon, sex work, and zombies teach us about religion, identity, and what it means to be human? This course examines how Jewish texts, traditions, and communities have understood bodies as hungry, desiring, gendered, healthy, sick, vulnerable, and mortal. Along the way, students will explore big questions about holiness and the sacred, gender and sexuality, authority and tradition, health, community, and otherness. We will also consider how antisemitic fantasies have imagined the Jewish body as monstrous, hypersexual, or racially inferior, and how those ideas have shaped Jewish history and the world we live in today. Course materials include sacred texts, Jewish law, art, film, recipes, medical writings, and pop culture from both historical and contemporary case studies. Optional in-person field trips and workshops in Ottawa will be offered. No prerequisites, no prior knowledge of Judaism required -just bring your curiosity.

**RELI 3840A: *Philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi***

Mohammed Rustom

Fall 2026

An introduction to the life and thought of the highly influential sage and philosopher Ibn 'Arabi. The course will first focus on a detailed examination of his metaphysics and theology. This will set the stage for a full-out engagement with his teachings on knowledge, love, hermeneutics, ethics, and human perfection.

**RELI 3840B: *Holy Land' in Text & Context***

Shawna Dolansky

Fall 2026

This course explores the complex religio-political histories of the region referred to as “the Holy Land” as we seek to understand why and how the land became "holy" alongside a history of what that has meant to different stakeholders over millennia, from ancient times to today. Our perspective

from religious studies will allow us to examine the ways in which political and social movements are often inseparable from religious ideologies, and the mutual influence of politics, culture, sociology, historical narrative-making, and religion on each other.

### **RELI 3840C: *Intro to Global Philosophy***

Mohammed Rustom

Winter 2027

A first-of-its kind course that highlights the depth, diversity, and creativity of Africana, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, Latin American, Mesoamerican, Native American, and Taoist philosophy through the study of a wide range of philosophical texts. Areas covered include metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, logic, ethics, storytelling, philosophy of religion, selfhood, death, and freedom.

## **Fourth Year Seminars**

### **CLCV 4210A: *Gnosticism: Ancient and Modern***

Timothy Pettipiece

Fall 2026

Cross listed with HIST 4210A; RELI 4850 C; RELI 5850 T

Throughout history people have been in search of secret revealed knowledge (known in Greek as gnosis), yet “Gnosticism” continues to be the subject of a great deal of confusion, misunderstanding, and even sensationalism. This seminar will examine the phenomenon through both surviving ancient sources and modern receptions. The much-contested term “Gnostic” is typically applied, in a historical sense, to a variety of early Christian sectarian groups from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, but is also used more broadly to characterize a range of esoteric and perennialist traditions from subsequent periods. As such, the course is divided into two parts: the first will closely examine the complex set of interpretive problems surrounding the ancient primary sources, particularly the Coptic Nag Hammadi codices, while the second will explore how gnostic themes and concepts are deployed within scholarly frameworks and fictional narratives.

### **CLCV 4801A: *Athens Through the Ages***

Susan Downie

Winter 2027

The city-state of Athens plays an out-sized role in our knowledge of ancient Greece, since it dominates both our literary and archeological sources. This course will examine Athens from the Neolithic to Roman periods, discussing its archaeology, art history, and written evidence (both literary and inscriptional) to shed light on what may have been unique about its politics, culture and society. We will consider how material remains augment our written record of Athenian history, and will examine the evolution and substance of Athenian democracy. “Athens” is construed broadly to include the city, the territory of Attica, and the areas into which Athens projected its power via the Delian League.

### **HUMS 4901A: *Platonism and Anti-Platonism***

Gregory MacIsaac

Fall 2026

Cross-listed with PHIL 4003A.

Does it matter whether or not there are Eternal Truths? Plato thought it did, but his opinion was not the only one in the ancient world. The Presocratic philosophers, Hippocratic doctors, the Sophists, Aristotle, Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics all had different ideas about reality, about the limits of our knowledge, and about how knowledge of how things 'really are' could inform our ethical and political ideas. In this seminar, each participant will choose a 'persona' as a student of one of these ancient schools of thought. Their task will be to present their ancient counterpart's ideas to the rest of the class, and to evaluate their 'opponents' presentations from out of their own position.

### **HUMS 4901B: *Philosophy as a Way of Life***

Anne Larivee

Fall 2026

Cross-listed with PHIL 4100A, PHIL 5000A.

\*\*This course is hosted by the Philosophy dept\*\*

Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL), a meta-philosophical movement originating in the work of historian Pierre Hadot (1922–2010), has become an influential way of rethinking the aims and methods of philosophy. Not to be confused with Public Philosophy, it offers an alternative to philosophy as a purely theoretical, professionalized activity, while remaining firmly anchored in the history of philosophy (esp. Greek and Roman). Different versions of the paradigm have been developed, and critical work has taken place from within. Yet despite its growing influence inside and outside academia, PWL has rarely been examined critically from outside its own conceptual horizon.

To prepare for this external assessment, the seminar will first examine competing versions of PWL, each engaging ancient philosophy differently: Hadot's spiritual exercises; Nussbaum's therapy of desire; Foucault's practice of care for the self; Sellars' art of living; Cooper's reasoned life; and Telo's strengthening of reason. We will identify points of convergence and divergence among these versions and consider their (in)compatibility with academic philosophy, the criteria by which they might be assessed, and whether philosophy as a way of life (in one or multiple versions) can be coherently integrated into contemporary practice. Participants, including the instructor, will be encouraged to clarify their own philosophical commitments in light of these discussions.

### **HUMS 4902A: *Renaissance to Enlightenment***

Micheline White

Fall 2026

Cross-listed with ENGL 4301A; ENGL 5303.

\*\*This course is hosted by the English dept\*\*

Renaissance queens have long fascinated the reading public, but their political power and literary writings have only recently become the objects of academic study. In this seminar, we will explore early modern attitudes towards the concepts of a "queen consort," a "queen regent," a "queen regnant" and a "dowager queen." We will focus in particular on the queen regnant who was understood to be both male and female: she had a female

“body natural,” but occupied a masculine “body politic.” Over the course of the semester we will engaged in a detailed exploration of the three queens’ textual and visual productions including speeches, published prose works, diplomatic letters, poetry, translations, and portraits. Students will be introduced to early modern paleography and book history. We will also consider the depictions of these queens in recent films and TV programs. Queens studied include: Katherine Parr, Mary I, and Elizabeth I.

### **HUMS 4903B:** *The Harlem Renaissance*

Erik Stephenson

Winter 2027

Cross-listed with ENGL 4708A

The Harlem Renaissance was a groundbreaking, multifaceted, and seminal African American cultural movement that flourished from *roughly* 1925 to 1935. Students in this seminar will study a wide range of representative works from the period - literature, of course, but also philosophy, cultural criticism, music, visual art, and even political speeches and pamphlets, editorials, and the like. They will explore the complex set of causes that brought it into being and sustained it, as well as the factors that hampered it and those which ultimately led to its end. They will think about questions of periodization and how (and whether) it can be divided into distinct phases, and identify its various camps and the differences in goals, ideals, tactics, etc., which separated them. Special attention will be paid: (1) to contemporary debates within the movement regarding the purpose, nature, and value of art in the context of the Black struggle for social, political, and economic equality; (2) to the complex role that Whites played - for better and for worse - in relation to the movement (as allies, collaborators, mentors, promoters, patrons, publishers, audiences and consumers, but also exploiters, voyeurs and revellers, and so on); and (3) to the movement's lasting legacy and influence.

### **RELI 4850A:** *Holocaust Responses*

Deidre Butler

Winter 2027

Cross-listed with RELI 5850A

This 4000-level in-person seminar invites students to explore how the Holocaust has been understood, remembered, and represented in religious and cultural contexts. What can sources such as wartime sermons and letters, rabbinic responsa, propaganda films, survivor testimony, memoir and fiction, post-Holocaust theology, popular film, museums, memorials, and Holocaust denial on social media tell us about religion and the Holocaust? What can they tell us about antisemitism, interfaith relations, and the memory of the Holocaust?

The course is organized around a hands-on final project that gives students the opportunity to contribute to Professor Butler’s documentary film that tells the story of Tom Deri and his family, how he survived the war in hiding in Budapest, and how the Holocaust is remembered in Hungary today. Students may help develop the storyboard, conduct background research, trace family trajectories, locate archival images and footage, support interviews, and curate digital resources for future learners. This is an opportunity not only to study responses to the Holocaust, but to be part of building one response.

**RELI 4850B:** *Studying Religious Transitions*

Ash Geissinger

Winter 2027

Cross-listed with RELI 5850T

This seminar will examine academic approaches to religious transformations, particularly conversions, deconversions, and revivals. Examples studied will be taken from different religious communities, places, and times. Among the issues discussed are how such seemingly personal religious decisions relate to broader social, economic, and political contexts.

**RELI 4850C:** *Gnosticism: Ancient and Modern*

Timothy Pettipiece

Fall 2026

Cross listed with CLCV/HIST 4210A; RELI 5850 T

Throughout history people have been in search of secret revealed knowledge (known in Greek as gnosis), yet “Gnosticism” continues to be the subject of a great deal of confusion, misunderstanding, and even sensationalism. This seminar will examine the phenomenon through both surviving ancient sources and modern receptions. The much-contested term “Gnostic” is typically applied, in a historical sense, to a variety of early Christian sectarian groups from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, but is also used more broadly to characterize a range of esoteric and perennialist traditions from subsequent periods. As such, the course is divided into two parts: the first will closely examine the complex set of interpretive problems surrounding the ancient primary sources, particularly the Coptic Nag Hammadi codices, while the second will explore how gnostic themes and concepts are deployed within scholarly frameworks and fictional narratives.