

Residential College in the Arts and Humanities

New Student Orientation (2019)

First-Year Course Descriptions

RCAH 111: Writing Transcultural Contexts

Fall Semester 2019

Section 002 (Sheridan) | TU TH 12:40 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Transculturation in Michigan

In Charles Baxter's award-winning short story, "The Disappeared," a Swedish engineer takes a business trip to Detroit. Seeking adventure, he begins to wander around the city. He soon realizes, however, that he is not fully equipped to understand the people and sights he encounters. Michigan is the setting for many stories of this kind — stories that involve cross-cultural encounters and interactions. In this section of RCAH 111, we'll examine Michigan stories that take place in the cities and small towns around us. We'll let these stories teach us about the challenges and opportunities that emerge when different cultural groups come into contact. We'll seek out a variety of ways to report our findings, from analytical essays to digital videos.

Section 003 (Monberg) | TU TH 3:00 p.m. - 4:50 p.m.

Communities in Motion: Im/migration, Memory, and Identity

This course explores different reasons people are displaced and otherwise prompted to leave their homelands and remake a life elsewhere. We will consider how displaced and diasporic people use writing (in different forms and media) to explore questions of memory and identity for themselves and their descendants. Readings will examine how common understandings of home, family, nation, and community are expressed and reformed by im/migrants, refugees, and others in the diaspora, focusing in particular on Filipinx, Korean, and Vietnamese/Hmong American writers. Writing projects will center around particular concepts, specific Asian/American historical experiences, or a particular set of texts written by Asian/American im/migrants and their descendants. Students will collaboratively practice conceiving, drafting, revising, and completing writing projects of various lengths for different audiences. Writing will also be an important tool and vehicle for thinking about the readings, preparing for class discussion, and developing your own ideas.

RCAH 112: Writing Research Technologies

Spring Semester 2020

Section 001 (Hamilton-Wray) | M W 12:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Writing Research Technologies: Daughters of the Screen and Black Women's Film Practice

Long before the “#Oscars So White” and “4% Challenge” campaigns, Black women artists have asserted their voices in the medium of film – creating, what some might call, a Black female gaze. What is the Black female gaze in film? This course interrogates the social, political, economic, and artistic implications of Black female-centered cinema. Students are introduced to Black Feminist Film Theory in the study of Black women’s film practice. Thus, students will draw on Black women’s literary practice and activism, and consider the politics of production, distribution, and exhibition in their investigation of Black women’s film practice. This research process course asks students to undertake an original research project that incorporates primary and secondary texts and requires them to use their newly acquired media literacy skills. Class assignments typically include oral presentations, interviews, and creative presentations.

Section 002 (MacDonald) | M W 3:00 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

Global Fan Practices: Translation, Subtitling, Fanfiction and Fanart

This section of RCAH 112 explores the processes by which fans of film, theatre, literature, television, and music overcome linguistic difference and geographic distance to engage with the cultural texts they love. Including but not limited to remediation, translation, and distribution, global fan practices will inspire to research and write about a multitude of cultural exchanges. As fandoms are often social, the course will investigate how communities are formed and maintained around a shared interest in a particular object of fandom or a particular nation’s popular culture, both physically and virtually. We will research the origins of fandom, considering sports and theatre celebrities of the 19th and early 20th centuries, film and television fandoms around brands such as Disney and franchises such as Star Trek, and literary fandoms around authors such as Jane Austen and characters such as Harry Potter. We will also study how digital technologies and online platforms facilitate fan practices today, considering, for example, Chinese fans who subtitle across a firewall. Students will formulate their own research projects and working with a range of printed and digital sources, they will develop their writing skills through in class writing tasks, peer review, blog posts, essays, and presentations.

Section 003 (Aronoff) | TU TH 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Our America: Cultures of American Modernism, 1919-1930

The focus of this section of RCAH 112 is the idea of “American culture” as it is renegotiated and reimaged in the United States in the 1920s and 30s. More accurately, we might say we are investigating shifts in “American” “culture,” since, we will discover, both of these terms – what it means to be an “American” and what it means to “have culture” – undergo crucial and complex shifts in this period. This section, then, will examine debates over “American” culture, race, national identity and art in the modernist period. Looking at various primary documents, with particular attention to the arts (modernist poetry, literature, jazz and other media), we will ask: how do these texts imagine the relationship between “race,” “nation,” and “culture”? How do these constructions engage debates over immigration, assimilation and pluralism? What is the relationship between racial and /or cultural identity and political identity (or citizenship)? What is the relationship between “culture,” art, and new modes technologies? Is industrialism and its methods the end of “culture” as “high art,” or the beginning of a new kind of “culture”? How did new forms of artistic expression (broadly speaking, “modernist” art) respond to, challenge, or incorporate these new social conditions? We will then think about how these modernist debates reverberate in contemporary, 21st Century contexts, in questions of transnational migration, national identity, cultural “ownership” and authenticity, etc. The breadth of these questions will allow for a wide variety of approaches and specific interest: like all sections of 112, we will be able to pursue the burning questions we raise by developing our skills as researchers and writers.

RCAH 202: The Presence of the Past

Fall Semester 2019

Section 001 (Hamilton-Wray) | M W 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

African Oral Traditions and the Making of History

Oral tradition plays a vital role in the construction and reproduction of “official histories”. However, the role of oral tradition is often not explicitly acknowledged. This course makes visible the presence and role of oral tradition in history-making, with particular focus on African diasporic oral culture found in folklore, music, proverbs, cuisine, humor, literature, and other aspects of African and African diasporic society. Through a look at multiple histories, specifically oral history, imagined history, autobiographical history, and “trans-history” (history that connects the past and the future), students address the questions: What do these multiple histories of African peoples reveal about their struggle, resistance, and liberation? How have and can these histories be employed for positive social change? How do we understand our own official histories when we take into account oral tradition?

Section 002 (Aerni-Flessner) | TU TH 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Global Slavery

This class looks at how slaves in many places around the world have produced not only goods and services, but also shaped a wide range of societies. We will look at Africa, the Caribbean, North and South America, and places in the Indian Ocean to examine and compare different forms of slavery across time and space. We will be looking at how these systems of involuntary labor were similar and different—and debate what exactly qualifies to be called “slavery.” The globalized world we live in is shaped, in many ways, by the past and the present of slavery. By bringing the story into our present contexts, we will better explain why knowing the history of enslavement is important, and help you better understand why debates about monuments, reparations, and human rights continue to be contentious.

Spring Semester 2020

Section 001 (Plough) | M W 8:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.

Language Globalization

This course begins by examining the definition of “global language”, asking why and how a global language develops. The reasons for the global spread of English are explored. The different global contexts in which English is used are examined. The educational and economic effects on societies and on individuals of the varied status of World Englishes are critically reviewed, including the role of language standardization and evaluation on maintenance of global inequality.

Section 002 (Miner) | TU TH 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

The (Visual) Presence of the Past

As humans, we cannot escape the “presence of the past” and the way that “history” shapes our contemporary lives. In this course, we will examine the past – particularly how artists and filmmakers represent it – and investigate how looking at the past will better suit us to comprehend the present – and in turn, build a more equitable future. Throughout the semester, we will focus on three distinct modes of representing the past: 1. writing, 2. comics, and 3. documentary cinema. In turn, we will investigate how the past remains germane in everyday activities, how artists and filmmakers represent it, and how we are individually and collectively active in constructing the past.

RCAH 215: Introduction to Arts

Fall Semester 2019

Section 001 (Sheridan) | M W 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Advanced Media Production and Design

This course will ask students to explore the social and aesthetic potentials of digital video and graphic design. Content is tailored to students who already have a background in one or more areas of media production. Students will generate creative and socially meaningful projects, exploring fundamental principles of design in the process. We will also investigate strategies for critiquing the work of others. This class will provide excellent preparation for anyone who wishes to work in the RCAH Language and Media Center.

Section 002 (Delgado, G.) | M W 12:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Yoga and Art: Creative Possibilities through Contemplative Practices

In this course you will examine how artists employ contemplative practices to create art with more meaning and interconnectedness with the world. Through training in contemplative practices including yoga, meditation, and walking, you will expand and create new artistic practices. You will be introduced to creative techniques and possibilities including, but not limited to: poetry, 'zine making, journaling, drawing, painting, and collage. Explore your personal awareness, discover how to quiet the busy mind, and learn how to allow space for creativity in everyday life. Bring your yoga mat and art supplies to class!

Section 003 (Scales) | TU TH 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

The Music of Southern Appalachia

Appalachian communities have a rich and deep musical tradition that has played a unique role in the musical, political, and social life of America. In this class, students will engage with this tradition through the first hand participation in the music, performing “old-time” string band music, ballad singing, shape-note singing, and more. We will also examine the many social functions of the music in American public life, including its influence on other contemporary musical genres (bluegrass, country, folk and protest music), its connection with American leftist politics in the 20th century, and its central role in the public imagination of “authentic” American identity. Some background in music is recommended (but not required).

Spring Semester 2020

Section 001 (Baibak) | M W 12:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Painting on the Edge

If one is going to paint, why paint on a canvas? Our world holds so many forms. Let us explore them with acrylic paint. Paint is the great transformer! Its color and texture can alter the way we perceive the shape of a thing. In this class, students will examine the relationships between paint and the 3-dimensional surface. We will look at artists/designers who already paint this way while developing our own painting techniques. We'll consider how form can communicate our ideas, create metaphors, and present as visual poetic compositions. We will be guided by real shadow and light relationships. We'll explore objects as micro and macroscopic worlds. Let's transform! Let's question how we understand objects in our culture. Let's reason “makings” value; should we create more stuff, or is it part of our evolution? These are questions that always come up for me, so maybe you're thinking about these things too. Let's paint on the edge without fear of falling off. No previous painting experience needed.

Section 002 (MacDonald) | TU TH 3:00 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

Introduction to Acting: From the Inside Out and the Outside In

Using a range of warmups, theatre games, improvisation, and acting exercises, this course introduces different approaches to developing acting skills. We will study practitioners such as Stanislavski and Chekhov, and establish a toolkit for building characters, using our voices, minds, bodies, and emotions. Working as an ensemble, students will learn how to work with their own

imagination and impulses, breakdown scripts, develop character psychology and physicality, and apply this to monologues and scenework in class. We will learn how to lead physical and vocal warmups, and how to undertake basic dramaturgical work as an actor. Along with analysing scripts, and developing characters, students will learn basic acting vocabulary and be able to discuss their practice, in class as well as in an oral defence of their work. We will work collaboratively and respectfully, to develop an understanding and appreciation of the craft of acting.

RCAH 225: Introduction to Community Engagement

Fall Semester 2019

Section 001 (Torrez) | TU TH 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Creating Space for Community Work

The RCAH curriculum underscores the importance of reciprocal education, which encourages students to engage in the co-production of knowledge with community youth partners. This course will investigate models of engagement with youth from diverse backgrounds. We will consider the complex societal issues directly impacting the lives of their young collaborators, and how we can collaboratively work through community engagement. This course will focus on ways to engage youth, the impacts of various models of engagement, and provide strategies to maintain a symbiotic and collaborative relationship. We will also discuss possible community-based research models.

Spring Semester 2020

Section 001 (Monberg) | M W 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Introduction to Community Engagement: Serving vs. Sustaining Community

This course introduces students to the currents and histories of community engagement, with a particular focus on the role the arts and humanities have played in community engagement and social change. We will explore differences between serving a community and sustaining one over time by exploring the challenges of building and sustaining community-based institutions, movements, and partnerships. Students will explore debates on volunteerism and engagement, talk with community organizers, and become familiar with local campus, grassroots, or non-profit partnerships. The aim of the course is to prepare students for more intensive community engagement by introducing them to community-based movements, how the context surrounding these movements shifts over time, and the role the arts and humanities can play in building and sustaining more just, equitable communities and constellations.

Section 002 (Rivera) | TU TH 12:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Emergent Strategies for Community Engagement

Emergent strategy is about shifting the way we see and feel the world and each other. Emergent strategies for community engagement is an exploratory course designed for students who have the curiosity to learn more about individual and community practices that foster constant change and rely on relational leadership for adaptation. This course is designed to guide students in reflecting upon their experiences to better understand and assess the decisions and actions they make as community members, partners, leaders, and educators. In person sessions will engage students in the process of participatory community facilitation, interpersonal dialog, and assessment development to measure transformative change. Additionally, students have the opportunity to pursue their own interest through a fieldwork assignment. All course work and course materials are designed to build on both in-class and field experiences throughout the semester, providing concepts and skills to apply in various community contexts.