

# Liberal Studies Electives (Degree Level) Course Descriptions – FALL 2023 (202301)

## Lower-Level Liberal Arts & Humanities (LHUM)

### **LHUM 1201 - The Evolution of Filmmaking**

This film studies course deals with the evolution of film in terms of its historical and cultural development, critical filmic analysis, and technical aspects of filmmaking. The course is divided into five parts, each of which examines a major time period in the development of film in a historical, social, cultural, critical, and technical context.

### **LHUM 1202 - Monotheistic Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam**

The practice of religion is widespread and unique to humans. It shapes and reflects people's deepest convictions about what is most important in life. This course explores the nature of religious experience and introduces the world views, ethics, practices, and beliefs of each of the major western religions. Three monotheistic faiths are covered: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A brief background of the origin and development of each religion is included. Additionally, the course explores contemporary issues relating to the relevance of religion to the personal and public arena. Students are given an opportunity through a research essay to explore and evaluate western religions not explicitly included in the course content.

### **LHUM 1203 - The Pleasure of Inquiry**

This course aims to develop the skills of inquiry and argumentation in a time of 'fake news' and destabilized truth by introducing you to the practice of philosophy and approaches to key philosophic questions in a lively, accessible way. It uses ordinary examples such as learning a martial art, detergents, dreaming, films like *The Matrix*, making money, the rise of artificial intelligence, and everyday consciousness to inquire into ongoing questions regarding knowledge, justice, reality, God, and the human condition, and to consider provocative responses to these questions.

### **LHUM 1216 - The Art of the Short Story**

Students are introduced to the rich world of story and its artistic expression in literature. Brief yet profound and supple, the short-story genre offers a unique perspective on human experience. Students read a variety of works by writers who are established and new, Canadian and international, ethnic majority and minority, contemporary and historical, female and male, in order to explore cultural differences as well as shared human experiences. They examine the stories' form and style (e.g., setting, plot, action, characterization, symbolism, and narration) to gain insight into content. The study of selected literary terms and critical theories, including theories specifically on the short story, allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the genre and the individual stories.

### **LHUM 1226 - Global Ancient Thought**

Great thinkers have existed around the world and across time. Their ideas have been an integral part of social, economic, cultural, and political life. Their philosophical and literary contribution has not simply been the isolated speculation of a few remarkable individuals but has extended much further: they have shaped their communities and continue to shape our global society today. This course takes a cross-cultural historical look at some of the most influential philosophical and literary traditions, such as the ancient Greek, the ancient Chinese, and ancient Indian traditions as well as others. In each tradition the course will examine various original writings on the following questions: How should we organize our social, economic, cultural, and political life? What is the place of humans in the grand, cosmological, scheme of things? And how should one live one's life? Some of the writings that we will review to answer the above questions are those of Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Sun Tzu, the Brahmanical tradition, and the Buddha.

### **LHUM 1228 - Re:Thinking Gender**

This course critically examines the various and often contradictory ways we think and talk about gender in contemporary North American contexts. How do popular discourses shape the ways we experience, embody, and "know" our genders? How – and by whom and to what ends – is our knowledge about gender constructed? To explore these questions, students analyze a range of historical and contemporary political, religious, scientific, medical, and pop culture constructions of gender and

investigate how conceptions of gender have been and continue to be used to structure and regulate key aspects of our social world. How are bodies that defy or deviate from established norms punished? Throughout this exploration of gender and power, students deepen their understanding of the intersections of gender, race, class, (dis)ability, sexuality, and culture by reflecting on their personal experiences. They also learn about past and present examples of resistance and transformation by studying the work of scholars, artists and activists including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Chelsea Vowel, Richard Fung and Laverne Cox.

### **LHUM 1233 - Fact or Fake: Finding Truth(s) in the Era of Fake News**

How do we know if news, video, or photos are fake or real? Do we have the time and knowledge to check? Do we want to check? Why should we care? Manufactured and so-called fake news posted on social media have become part of a dangerous new reality. Information spread through social networks is often accepted over traditional more reliable fact-checked news. These manipulations have become powerful tools for politicians, conspiracy theorists, corporations, and ordinary people. The effects can be felt in many fields such as science, the environment, politics, and culture. This course will explore the impact of fake news on traditional fact-checked news media and, in turn, its influence on society. Media from a variety of sources will be evaluated for reliability and validity. Students will learn how to deconstruct media in order to distinguish what is fact vs what is fiction.

## **Lower-Level Liberal Science & Technology (LSCI)**

### **LSCI 1204 - Preserving the Planet**

A personal computer running 24 hours per day adds about two tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere each year. When you consider the explosion of computer ownership alone, you can appreciate the growing impact people have on our planet. Preserving the Planet is a natural science course emphasizing awareness, conservation, and sustainability of ecological systems. This course will provide students with an understanding of the major principles in the biological and physical sciences. Students will also learn how technology and schools of thought can have both negative and positive impacts on biodiversity. With this information, students will gain an understanding of problems and solutions to maintaining natural systems. Students will learn the role of scientific inquiry in ecological studies and apply analysis and critical thinking to issues learned in class and their own research.

### **LSCI 1205 - What's Bugging Us? Microbes, Molecules, and Medicines**

This course examines the links between human activities (individual and societal level), environmental factors, and the incidence of infectious diseases on humans, animals, and plants with an emphasis on issues that are locally relevant to Canada. A wide range of concepts from several disciplines (i.e., ecology, epidemiology, human medicine, among others) will be covered in order to illustrate that disease development and transmission result from a complex interplay between host, pathogen, and environment as illustrated by outbreaks in the past, e.g., smallpox epidemics, and more recently, SARS-Covid-2 pandemic. Some of the current topics in ecology of infectious diseases and environmental toxicology that this course explores include diversity of pathogens, antibiotic resistance to bacterial diseases, emergent and re-emergent infectious diseases, as well as how chemicals and pathogens interact to weaken the immune system, reduce vaccine efficacy, and increase pathogen virulence. This course will promote scientific literacy by increasing the ability of students to read and understand science in the news, to discuss current health and ecological issues and to make responsible decisions as citizens.

## **Lower-Level Liberal Social Science (LSSC)**

### **LSSC 1202 - Working in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The 21st Century has seen revolutionary changes in the world of work. Increasing precarity, the growth of artificial intelligence in the workplace, and the creation of the gig economy have all contributed to a working environment that has little in common with that experienced by previous generations. This interdisciplinary social science course will explore the history of work in Canada, and the workplace as it now exists, in order to understand how work has evolved and changed and how society is grappling with the issues revealed by these new workplace challenges.

### **LSSC 1203 - Introduction to Canadian Politics**

How does politics affect your life and future? Is there a Canadian national identity? This course introduces students to major debates and questions in Canadian politics and society, and the more

enduring problems underlying these issues. The aim of the course is to foster the student's capacity to develop their own interpretation of Canadian politics and society.

### **LSSC 1204 - Sociological Inquiry**

This course introduces students to the language and practice of sociological inquiry and uses it to understand and challenge their everyday experience of the world and ordinary views of society. By investigating topics such as everyday life rituals, the socialization process, social inequality, media, religion, and the rise of postmodern society, sociological inquiry explores the strange nature of the familiar world students live in.

### **LSSC 1206 - Indigenous Education in the Canadian Context**

This course looks at education in an historical and present-day context, including ways in which Indigenous communities educated their children prior to European contact. It examines the Canadian state's policies on education of Indigenous peoples and explores education in Indigenous communities today. Specifically, the course provides an understanding of residential schools and their impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples, families, and diverse communities. Additionally, students will look at the various ways in which Indigenous people continue to challenge and resist colonial education and reclaim education for themselves and their communities. The main aim of the course is to provide students with a framework for understanding the historical and contemporary issues surrounding Indigenous Education in Canada. It is hoped that through this course students will gain critical insights into the lives and educational attainment of Indigenous peoples.

### **LSSC 1209 - Social Psychology**

Why does the presence of others influence the way we behave and think? How do stereotypes develop? Does the way we behave change the way we think? This course provides an overview of research and theory in social psychology examining social influences on an individual's cognition, emotions, and behaviour. Topics include social thinking (the self, social beliefs, attitudes), social influence (persuasion, conformity, group influence), and interpersonal relations (aggression, altruism, prejudice). Students will analyze predominant theories and research in the field of social psychology and their applications.

### **LSSC 1213 - Introduction to Geography**

This course introduces students to the major themes in physical and human geography. With a focus on Canada, students survey and investigate the role of maps and location, urban, regional, physical, cultural, and environmental topics. The course provides a framework to explain and familiarize students with geographical concepts, including the breadth of geographic inquiry. Students learn about the relationship between the various branches of geography and place and space. An Introduction to Geography is an integrated course that studies many aspects of the physical and cultural environment. This course provides students a basis for understanding the spatial organization of the world in which they live.

### **LSSC 1216 - Urban Issues and Solutions**

Toronto, like many large urban centers worldwide, finds itself at a crossroads: how does it respond to the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and global pandemics while ensuring its citizens equal access to essential resources like energy, mobility, and health? This course presents a unique opportunity for students to learn from City Hall senior leaders as subject matter experts. Students discuss pressing urban issues and planning, think critically about the future of the City, and look at integrated and innovative solutions.

### **LSSC 1220 - Race and Racism in the Americas and Caribbean**

Racism and the categories of race are pervasive phenomena that occur across the world. Many scholars have argued that the very idea of "race" – the notion that human beings can be divided into groups such as "whites", "blacks", "Indians", etc. – was first invented in the Americas. But what are races? Does it mean the same thing to be "white", "black" or "Asian" in Canada as it does in Brazil or Jamaica? If colour is rooted in assumptions about biology in parts of Canada, does the same hold for the Caribbean? Is race simply a delusion, a cover for political and economic domination? Can we aspire to eliminate the idea of race altogether or is its hold too pervasive, its appeal to the mind too great? This course looks at various stages in the development of racial categories in the Americas and the Caribbean. Our readings include theoretical, ethnographic, and literary works, but also our own experiences, the popular media, and the language we speak and hear around us.

# Upper-Level Liberal Arts & Humanities (LHUM)

## **LHUM 1305 - Gothic and Horror Culture: The Need for Fear (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

Ghosts, vampires, monsters, haunted houses, and possessed children: why do humans need to scare themselves in so many “gothic” ways? One answer is that the Gothic provides a useful metaphor for the anxieties and traumas of the human condition (Groom, 2012). In other words, scary situations on the page and screen work effectively to provide insight into the anxieties in our daily lives as well as in the life of our culture in various periods. For example, we can read a movie like *Carrie* as a reaction to the “threat” of 1960s women’s liberation, and *Poltergeist* as a reaction to the rampant capitalism of the 1980s. Reading literature and watching movies thus helps us understand the society we live in and normalizes the changes that take place within it. We’ll look at some of these changes by investigating classic Gothic concerns such as doubleness/repression; haunted houses and their ghosts; monsters from vampires to werewolves; children, women, and horror; and cultural melancholy. To do so we’ll use texts from the past like Edgar A. Poe’s “William Wilson”, Robert L. Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as contemporary narratives like Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*.

## **LHUM 1306 - Global Classical and Medieval Literature (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

This course introduces students to literature and thought from several major traditions across the globe, spanning roughly the 4th- through the 14th-centuries. The main theme of the course is a cross-cultural comparison of how the emotional lives of individuals are expressed, communicated and shared in and through language. This will require introducing students to basic religious, political and cultural contexts of each area of the world. The course balances an appreciation for each literary tradition on its own terms with an understanding of how religious ideas, moral values, role-models, histories, and fantasies spread across cultures via the oral and written word. Along the way, students will be introduced to various literary forms, such as the allegory, the poem, and the frame-tale narrative, along with the reflections of writers from around the world on the nature and purpose of literature.

## **LHUM 1307 - Understanding the Middle East (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

The phrase “Middle East” appears on various media in relation to topics ranging from the politics of oil to the price of gas, terrorism, war, women’s rights, Islam, or the trials and triumphs of democracy. Meanwhile, there is generally little understanding of the region beyond its representation in headlines or in pop culture. Covering the history of the region from the advent of Islam to the present day, this course provides a basic historical understanding of this diverse and complex region and the global influences which have shaped, and continue to shape, what is known as the “Middle East” today. Through a survey of the region’s history, culture, and involvement in international politics, participants will gain a better understanding of this intricate and fascinating region and its vital place within the global community.

## **LHUM 1308 - Points Beyond: The World of Travel Writing (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

From factual article to personal narrative, travel writing allows us to “journey” to different lands and gain new understandings of people, places, and ideas. In this upper-level, interdisciplinary course, students examine the different forms and purposes of travel writing as well as its personal and cultural significance. They read commercial articles to understand the business of travel writing. They also read travel essays and fiction and watch a travel film, exploring both artistic expression and questions of identity, morality, freedom, and human bonds. Critical theories on travel and travel writing, amongst others, allow a deeper understanding of the genre.

## **LHUM 1310 - Existentialism (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

What is worth living for? If we have an answer –say, love, happiness, justice, or eternal life-where did we get this answer from? Are religion, social norms, political and economic ideologies credible sources? If not, are we free to create any value and meaning we want for our own lives? And if we are completely free, what sort of responsibility do we have to other people, if any? In this course, we will be exploring these perplexing but fundamental questions about human existence through an examination of philosophical essays, film, literature and theatre from a movement of thinkers and artists known as the existentialists.

## Upper-Level Liberal Science & Technology (LSCI)

### **LSCI 1304 The Story of Food: Growth of the Modern Meal (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

Unlike nature's other eaters, humans have developed enormous control over their food chains. Through the use of various technologies, such as agriculture, synthetic fertilizers, and food processing, we have profoundly modified our food chains and, as a result, created entirely new eating possibilities for ourselves. Today our food is abundant and comes from all over the world. Much of what is consumed in the modern world is heavily processed, making it easy to store, quick to prepare, and convenient to eat. This industrialization of food production has given rise to a new type of consumer – the industrial eater. What implications does eating industrially have for our health and for the health of our environment? In this course, students investigate changes in human food chains from the hunter-gatherers to present-day industrialized agriculture and learn about the impacts of modern food production on people, ecosystems, and biodiversity. The critical role of biodiversity within and beyond human food chains is emphasized. Students analyze and think critically about issues explored in class and through independent research.

## Upper-Level Liberal Social Science (LSSC)

### **LSSC 1319 - Global Justice (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

The onset of globalization has coincided with the emergence of a variety of calls for “global justice”, reform, and alternative forms of globalization. The desire for global justice and alternative globalizations emerges from economic, cultural, ecological, and political trends. This course is interdisciplinary in nature, combining perspectives from history, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, philosophy, and civil society to explore the meanings of global justice and alternative globalization, their central policy proposals, institutional structures, and the new forms of social experience that are producing the desire for greater transnational and international equality. The course focuses on the intersection between appeals for economic redistribution, cultural recognition, environmental sustainability, and political representation. It pays close attention to the relationship between various forms of social inequality such as racism, sexism, classism, and sexuality. Further issues to be explored include the role that corporations, cultural producers, civil society, states, and Canadian writers and organizations are having in shaping calls for global justice.