

# The Elson Family Arts Initiative

Thanks to the generous contribution of the Elson family, the Elson Family Arts Initiative has supported many exciting arts-related course projects, final performances, and course exhibitions.

The creative opportunities for learning that you will find in this booklet are numerous and unique. The curricular art-making courses that are supported by the Elson Family Arts Initiative use the tools and methods of the arts and art-makers of all media and genres to explore course material in new and exciting ways:

- Imagine reading a medieval text like *Beowulf*, then learning to practice the medieval art of calligraphy that was used to first record the text.
- Think about practicing a foreign language by employing the same tools of diction and poise that an actor does.
- What if you were to present the material you learned over the course of a semester via a creative final project, exhibition, or performance instead of a final paper?

There are many courses in the pages that follow that offer opportunities to do all this and much more, and we hope to see you in an upcoming art-making course!

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**For additional inspiration in art-making, check out the opportunities available through Harvard Arts, the Office for the Arts at Harvard, and Arts @ 29 Garden:**

<http://arts.harvard.edu/>

<http://ofa.fas.harvard.edu/>

<http://artsgarden.harvard.edu/>

# Art-Making Courses in the Elson Family Arts Initiative

## Fall 2016

- Ancient Near East 103: Ancient Lives
- French Ab: Beginning French II: Exploring Parisian Life and Identity
- French 80a: Classicism and Modernity: An Introduction to Performance
- Freshman Seminar 35n: The Art and Craft of Acting
- Freshman Seminar 36g: The Creative Work of Translating
- History & Literature 90cc: Boundaries, Borders, Bodies
- History & Literature 90ch: Computers and American Culture
- Music 179r: Advanced Electronic Music: Transforming the Singing  
Voice
- Spanish 126: Performing Latinidad
- Theater, Dance & Media 150: The Art of Scenography: 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century Directorial Concepts and Set Design

## Spring 2017

- English 44: Arrivals: British Literature 700-1700
- English 90ht/History 84e: How to Read a Book
- French Ab: Beginning French II: Exploring Parisian Life and Identity
- French 148c: Performing in French: A Production of a Modern Tragedy
- Music 194r: Special Topics: Performing Musical Difference: Case  
Studies from the Silk Road Project

# Fall 2016

## **Ancient Near East 103: Ancient Lives**

*Gojko Barjamovic (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)*  
*Tu., Th., 11:30-1*

What are the essential elements of human society? Have our fundamental conditions developed, and how? Can we use themes from ancient history to think about contemporary society and culture? These questions are in focus in this course on 'Ancient Lives,' which explores the earliest human civilizations in the region commonly known as Mesopotamia (c. 3000-300 bce) in what is now Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Few elements in the way we live and organize ourselves today are to be taken for granted. There is, and has always been, a wealth of ways in which humans live. But biologically we are the same as our ancestors of 5000 years ago, at the dawn of history. Any likeness or difference between 'us and them' is therefore likely to be a product of history and culture. 'Ancient Lives' builds upon this realization to inspire a critical way of thinking about society in the broadest possible scope. Areas explored during the course are selected for their relevance across the range of contemporary life - they include freedom, music, public health, food, jurisprudence, trade, the visual arts, science, sexuality, religion, and political power. You learn about how societies and individuals have dealt with change on multiple levels, from large-scale societal revolutions to personal transformation. Having taken this course, you will have gained a fundamental understanding and appreciation of human life in the broadest scope, as well as of your own life as a part of history. You will be able to critically assess contemporary discourses on the study of 'the other' in past and present; engage with core concepts of human society, such as justice, beauty, value, and belief on a broad historical base; be familiar with examples of classical social theory and thinkers through concrete cases in which their work has been applied to or shaped by the study of the past; and acquire skills in presenting scholarly work to a general audience.

**Art Integration: Integrating performance, music, costume design, and stage art, students will perform a live reading from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* at Arts @ 29 Garden and in the Semitic Museum for friends and family.**

## French Ab:

### Beginning French II: Exploring Parisian Life and Identity

*Nicole Mills (Romance Languages & Literatures) with*

*Brendan Shea (American Repertory Theater)*

*M. through Th., with hour-long sections at 10 and 12*

In the second course in the Elementary French sequence, students will engage in an online simulation of life in Paris while exploring diverse facets of Parisian identity. Through the interpretation and analysis of Parisian texts, film, paintings, and photography, students will actively engage in oral and written communication in the past, present, and future. Students will learn to make suggestions, express emotions and opinions, extend invitations, and convey hypothetical situations.

**Art Integration:** A.R.T. Institute faculty and graduate students, in conjunction with members of Harvard's French-language theater troupe *La Troupe*, will lead workshops for Beginning French II students in the fundamentals of stage acting and improvisation. These workshops will equip students with some of the tools used by professional actors to communicate their stories, as well as demonstrate how these same tools will aid French learners in speaking with confidence and clarity.

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## French 80a:

### Classicism and Modernity: An Introduction to Performance

*Sylvaine Guyot (Romance Languages & Literatures)*

*Tu., Th., 11:30-1*

This course aims to help students, including those who are genuine novices in acting, to understand and experience theater as a form of physical expression that evolves as aesthetic and ideological contexts change across time. Readings include the most famous French playwrights of both the early modern age (Molière, Corneille, Racine) and the later 20<sup>th</sup>/early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. We explore how theater is used to interrogate questions such as sexual taboos, social injustices, or political engagement. Special emphasis is paid to the power of performance through practical workshops and videos of recent productions. The final project consists of an excerpt to be performed in French.

**Art Integration:** French 80a combines the reading of theater and the practice of performance with the study of French culture. The final project consists of an excerpt to be performed (using costumes, music and/or video, etc.).

## **Freshman Seminar 35n: The Art and Craft of Acting**

*Remo Airaldi (Theater, Dance & Media)*

*M., 4-6*

We've all watched a great performance and wondered, "How did that actor do that?" Acting is undoubtedly the most popular, most widely experienced of the performing arts and yet, in many ways, it remains a mystery. This seminar will give students an opportunity to demystify the art of acting by introducing them to the basic tools of the trade; they will learn about the craft of acting by actually 'doing' it. It will provide an introduction to acting by combining elements of a discussion seminar with exercises, improvisations, and performance activities. Improvisation will be used to improve group/ensemble dynamics, minimize habitual behaviors, and develop characters. Students will explore a range of acting techniques designed to give students greater access to their creativity, imagination, and emotional life. The aim will be to improve skills that are essential to the acting process, like concentration, focus, relaxation, observation, listening, etc. In the later part of the term students will work on monologues. Students will also attend and critique productions at the Loeb Drama Center and other theaters in the Boston area. (There will be no charge to the student for attending required theater performances).

**Art Integration: Directors and actors from the productions the class attends will speak to students about the acting process. Students will participate in class modules like Acting Shakespeare, Acting in a Musical, and Improvisation, based on the productions they attend.**

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## **Freshman Seminar 36g: The Creative Work of Translating**

*Stephanie Sandler (Slavic Languages & Literatures)*

*W., 1-3*

Translation makes culture possible. Individual writers and thinkers draw sustenance and stimulation from works created outside their own cultures, and artists working in one format get ideas from those working in entirely different media. Translation between languages and between art forms will center our seminar's work. Taking a broad view of translation as a mental activity, we will study poems, fiction, film, photography, and music. We will stretch our own imaginative capacities by transposing material across media and genres, creating homophonic translations, and translating between languages. We will work individually as well as collaboratively. We will read a small amount of translation theory, and some reflections by working translators. We will invite into our classroom a practicing poet, artist, and translator or two, attend poetry

readings and lectures at Harvard, and have at least one field trip, to the Boston MFA. The only requirement is some knowledge of a language besides English – and a readiness to play with languages, art forms, and texts. Readings from Kazim Ali, Gennady Aygi, Walter Benjamin, Caroline Bergvall, Jorge Luis Borges, Joseph Brodsky, Anne Carson, Emily Dickinson, Forrest Gander, Robert Grenier, Susan Howe, Edmond Jabès, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Nabokov, Sappho, W. G. Sebald, Rosmarie Waldrop, Wang Wei, and the Bible; music by John Adams, Luciano Berio, and David Grubbs; artwork by Peter Sacks, Frances Stark. Films to include *The Clock*, *Despair*, and *The Golem*.

**Art Integration: Invited poet and artist Robert Grenier will lead students in an exercise to create art/poetry with a site-specific project, such as the banks of the Charles or the wharf. This will offer students a chance to play at the boundary lines between verbal and visual creation.**

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## **History & Literature 90cc: Boundaries, Borders, Bodies**

*Maryam Monalisa Gharavi (History & Literature)  
T., 10-12*

Border geographies and urban boundaries delimit the terms of identity, reinforcing the notion of the city-state with material conditions and force. Such demarcations throw light on basic understandings of inclusion and exclusion, and how ‘us’ and ‘them’ are defined along the course of time. They are often in subtle or outright conflict with concurrent notions of selfhood, property, freedom, and mobility associated with modern life. The course traces along zones of passage that limit, regulate, and control mobility (including frontiers, enclosures, walls, barbed wire, among others) and theories of the distribution of the sensible (including security, circulation, mobility, flow, etc.). The course doubles as an arts practicum whereby students will engage weekly with works of art relating to the course themes, and create their own artwork with material guidance.

**Art Integration: Students will engage with works of art relating to the seminar’s themes and produce works of art of their own. No previous experience in the arts is expected or assumed, and a process-based approach to making work in any medium is encouraged. Students are provided with a small materials budget, shared access to studio space, arts-making workshops, and open studio sessions.**

## History & Literature 90ch: Computers and American Culture

*Jennifer Schnepf (History & Literature)*  
T., 2-4

This course introduces students to digital culture in the United States after 1945. In the span of only a few decades, the role of computers in American society dramatically transformed from a complex tool serving the aims of the military to a children's toy found in the domestic space of the American home. How did authors and filmmakers make sense of this dramatic transformation? We will engage with cultural sources ranging from classic midcentury novels and educational films, to Looney Tunes cartoons and DC Comics in order to formulate answers to this question. Course includes film screenings and field trips.

**Art Integration: Students will script, film, and edit short films about the computer as modeled by the cinematic arts they encounter in the class. Students will host a screening and discussion of their films with renowned historian and documentarian of science, Peter Galison, responding.**

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## Music 179r: Advanced Electronic Music: Transforming the Singing Voice

*Hans Tutschku (Music)*  
T., 2-4

The human voice has been one of the central instruments of music-making at all times. Composers have always tried to combine it with new compositional discoveries and technologies. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when real-time sound transformation became available, countless works combining voices and live-electronics emerged. Exploring new artistic means requires the possibility to experiment. Composers need to develop taste and practical abilities to combine the live performers' expressions with those offered by technology through a series of experiments. This course will cover three essential components:

- Musical and technological analysis of existing works of the past 30 years
- Programming technics for live-electronics with current software
- A series of four workshops with internationally acclaimed soprano Tony Arnold, culminating in performances of student works

**Art Integration: This is a new, upper-level course in electroacoustic music that will contain four workshops with soprano Tony Arnold and will expose students to practical questions of interpretation and experimentation with the singer's particular capacities in relationship to live-electronic sound**

transformations. Between four two-hour workshops, the course will cover historical and theoretical topics as well as software programing aspects.

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## **Spanish 126: Performing Latinidad**

*Lorgia Garcia-Peña (Romance Languages & Literatures)*  
*M., W., 1-2:30*

What exactly does the word 'latinidad' mean? How has 'the Latino' been constructed in U.S. culture? What has been the importance of 'latinidad' in the social and political history of people of Latin American descent in this country? What place does 'latinidad' occupy within the North American academy? Our course attempts to respond to these inquiries through an analysis of Latino performance and its representation within particular literary and cultural productions: poetry, theater, film, and stand-up comedy.

**Art Integration: Students will collaborate with filmmakers to produce an artistic and intellectual intervention video action, employing the contemporary Latin American tradition of acción performática, which will be shown in multiple locations across campus. The students will continue to work with the artists on their blogs throughout the term. There will also be two events featuring a film and conversation between the artists and students.**

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## **Theater, Dance & Media 150: The Art of Scenography: 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Directorial Concepts and Set Design**

*Julie Smeliansky (Theater, Dance & Media)*  
*T., 3-5*

In this course, students will study the work of the great 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century auteur directors and set designers. Students will explore a range of artistic movements including Constructivism, Futurism, and Dada, and discuss how the theater became a place to experiment with the concepts and discoveries of these movements. Examining primary source materials in the Harvard Theatre Collection, students will research the work of artists including Gordon Craig, Richard Wagner, Leon Bakst, Pablo Picasso, Konstantin Stanislavsky, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. The course will also focus on the work of such contemporary directors and designers as Robert Wilson, George Tsypin, and Robert Lepage.

**Art Integration:** Students will attend innovative, contemporary productions on Broadway and at the Metropolitan Opera in NYC, specifically *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* and *L'Amour de Loin*. Students will get a backstage tour of the Met and meet with some of the artists who worked on the productions. Tickets to shows and transportation to New York City will be covered for students by the Elson Fund.

# Spring 2017

## **English 44:**

### **Arrivals: British Literature 700-1700**

*TBA (English)*

*M., W., 2-3:30*

An introduction to major works of English literature from 700-1700, with particular attention to the relationship between literary forms and the changes brought by conquest, religion, and cultural exchange. Key texts include *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Paradise Lost*. You will hone close reading skills, analyze poetic language, learn to read Middle English aloud, and develop your ability to write critical essays.

**Art Integration: Students will gain first-hand experience of the art of calligraphy that produced medieval manuscripts. A calligraphy expert, Maryanne Grebenstein, will be invited to conduct a workshop for students who will cut their own quills and apply their skills on a piece of genuine vellum.**

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## **English 90ht / History 84e:**

### **How to Read a Book**

*Jill Lepore (History) and Leah Price (English)*

*T., 1-3*

This hands-on interdisciplinary undergraduate seminar is for students who want to think about what a book is and how to read one. Readings include historical and literary narratives of reading by Cervantes, Richardson, Franklin, Sterne, Ellison, and Bradbury, together with research exercises in Harvard library and museum collections.

**Art Integration: We propose three workshops, each lasting three hours; one on papermaking, one on printing, and one on book binding. In this third iteration of the course, we would like to extend our collective exploration of the past and future of books by adding a more systematic art-making component, which will require the expertise of a papermaker from the North Bennet Street school in Boston, a printer at the Bow & Arrow Press, and bookbinders on the faculty of the Rare Book School and Northeast Document Conservation Center.**

## French Ab:

### Beginning French II: Exploring Parisian Life and Identity

Nicole Mills (*Romance Languages & Literatures*) with

Brendan Shea (*American Repertory Theater*)

*M. through Th., with hour-long sections at 9, 10, 11, 12, and 1*

In the second course in the Elementary French sequence, students will engage in an online simulation of life in Paris while exploring diverse facets of Parisian identity. Through the interpretation and analysis of Parisian texts, film, paintings, and photography, students will actively engage in oral and written communication in the past, present, and future. Students will learn to make suggestions, express emotions and opinions, extend invitations, and convey hypothetical situations.

**Art Integration: A.R.T. Institute faculty and graduate students, in conjunction with members of Harvard's French-language theater troupe *La Troupe*, will lead workshops for Beginning French II students in the fundamentals of stage acting and improvisation. These workshops will equip students with some of the tools used by professional actors to communicate their stories, as well as demonstrate how these same tools will aid French learners in speaking with confidence and clarity.**

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## French 148c:

### Performing in French: A Production of a Modern Tragedy

Sylvaine Guyot (*Romance Languages & Literatures*)

TBA

This course focuses on the preparation of a student-led production of a contemporary French play, and concludes with a performance in French at the end of the semester. To react to the challenges we will face in staging a 'modern tragedy,' we will examine the diversity of tragic forms and motifs since the 17<sup>th</sup> century up to today through the close reading of a given set of plays, as well as the main trends in the contemporary staging, through the viewing and discussion of video versions of recent productions.

**Art Integration: French 148c focuses on the preparation of a full production of a French contemporary play (*Les Illusions comiques* by Olivier Py) and culminates with one open-to-the-public performance in French, with English supertitles, at Farkas Hall.**

## **Music 194r:**

### **Special Topics: Performing Musical Difference: Case Studies from the Silk Road Project**

*Kay Shelemay (Music)*

*W, 1-3*

This course, a collaborative venture in the classroom with musicians of the Harvard-affiliated Silk Road Ensemble, will explore the social processes and ethical challenges of intercultural musical exchange, composition, and performance. For fifteen years, the Silk Road Project and its signature ensemble have sought to enhance intercultural communication through their music-making, bringing together performers and composers from across the world to perform together. With an articulated humanistic goal of creating “unexpected connections, collaborations, and communities in pursuit of meaningful change,” the Silk Road Project provides a rich laboratory for appraising how dimensions of difference have been conveyed through artistic performance as well as the many issues that such initiatives raise. Critical and reflexive theoretical approaches from ethnomusicology, anthropology, and performance studies, among other disciplines, will be used to frame selected case studies from the Silk Road Ensemble experience. Class sessions will include dialogue with musicians from the Silk Road Ensemble who will serve as interlocutors and provide insider perspectives of the ensemble’s work in various domains. Each student will pursue a term project (with the possibility of collaboration with classmates) and present a discussion of it in class, focusing on ethnographic and/or archival materials that shed light on musical difference as daily practice; undertake a focused project in an aspect of social engagement and/or community service; or collaborate with an intercultural group of colleagues in a performance.

**Art Integration: This collaborative course will include musicians of the Harvard-affiliated Silk Road Ensemble in each class for discussions of the social processes and ethical challenges of intercultural musical exchange, composition, and performance; there will be performance activities in many class sessions and anticipated student participation in a public performance.**