

GHEA21

Fall 2026 GHEA21 Online Courses

A Thousand Splendid Suns and the Contemporary Afghan Woman's Story

September 21, 2026 – December 03, 2026

Lucy Ferriss, Bard College

Students will read Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* both as a literary exemplar and as the subject of postcolonial critique. We will pay particular attention to the dual point of view in the novel; to Hosseini's perspective as a member of the Afghan diaspora; and to the fluid interpretations of history embedded in novels tied to controversial events. By the end of class, students will have written two stories of their own, one from a perspective close to their own and one from a perspective close to their mother's. Students who are taking this class for academic credit through GHEA will also be working on critical theory and approaches to Hosseini's book in the context of gender studies and postcolonial studies. Those students will be writing a 10 – 12 page critical paper in addition to the creative work. For all students, workshops and group presentations are an essential part of this course.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

AI for Social Research

September 05, 2026 – December 19, 2026

Damir Malikov, Smolny Beyond Borders

This course introduces social science researchers to the practical use of Large Language Models (LLMs) in their work. Designed for non-programmers, the course covers the full research pipeline from finding and collecting data to analyzing it with AI tools and validating results for publication. Students will learn prompt engineering, work with real datasets from media archives and human rights organizations, and gain basic "vibe coding" skills to build simple tools without prior programming experience. The course addresses the challenges of working with hard-to-access sources, censorship, and sensitive materials in authoritarian and transitional contexts. By the end, students will have completed an independent research project using LLM-assisted methods.

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Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Artificial Intelligence in a Human World: Skills, Ethics & Impact

September 07, 2026 – December 16, 2026

Anguelina Popova, American University of Central Asia

This course introduces modern AI systems and tools while exploring their ethical implications and societal impact. Students gain practical experience using AI technologies like Large Language Models, Generative Art tools, and AI agents, while simultaneously developing a critical framework for understanding AI ethics, governance, and responsible use. The course combines hands-on workshops with discussions on the philosophical, social, and policy dimensions of AI in contemporary society. Beyond practical applications, this course helps demystify the inner workings of modern AI tools, from foundational machine learning concepts to transformer architectures that power today's large language models. Students will unpack the technical "black box" of AI systems to understand how they function, why they sometimes fail, and what their fundamental limitations are. This technical grounding, accessible to non-technical students, will empower learners to think more critically about AI capabilities, make informed decisions about their use, and engage meaningfully in debates about the future of artificial intelligence in society. Through a combination of interactive demonstrations, intuitive explanations, and hands-on exercises, students will develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms behind the AI revolution, providing them with both practical skills and the conceptual framework needed to navigate an increasingly AI-integrated world.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Civil Society, Activism in the Contemporary World

August 26, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Nurgul Dzhanaeva, American University of Central Asia

This course is an introduction to civil society - a growing social phenomenon in the contemporary world. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are key actors in sustainable development. This course is focused on introduction of the concepts of civil society and civic space, roles of CSO, CSO development effectiveness, CSO enabling environment, the importance and impact of the civil society organizations at various levels. Civil society is a vibrant social construct with its own internal and external

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mechanisms of relations, and structures. They operate in very diverse forms. They play a multitude of roles, including advocacy for human rights, justice, service-delivery, research and policy development. Human rights, sustainability of development, equality, levels of democracy are linked with the level of civil society organizations' enabling environment. In the contemporary world, more and more development actors are structurally engaged with CSOs. In the course, students will study diverse civil society actors, examine role and functions of civil society organizations at country, regional and global levels, analyse elements of the civil society enabling environment, which is very important in the current trend of shrinking civic space in many countries; impact of the civil society organizations at various levels, such country and global. Compiled reading materials will help students to dig deep into each of the four modules. The course combines hands-on workshops with discussions of human rights, democracy, equality, inclusiveness. During discussions students will learn to unpack broad concepts of political participation, democratization, human rights and equality. Through a combination of interactive demonstrations and hands-on exercises, students will develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which governments, donors, and other development actors strengthen civil society enabling environments.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Development Aid and Politics

August 24, 2026 – December 09, 2026

Bugra Güngör, American University of Central Asia

This course investigates the political aspects of development aid, exploring how aid delivery shapes and is shaped by international and domestic politics. Students will engage with key theoretical frameworks and debates about the determinants, effectiveness, and (un)intended outcomes of aid. Themes include theories of development, donor and recipient politics, and the intersection of development aid with issues such as media, foreign policy, and humanitarian diplomacy. Thanks to certain case studies from the Global South/North and critical reflections, the course provides students with a nuanced understanding of how development aid operates as an instrument for global, regional, and local dynamics of politics.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

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Disability and Human Rights: Activism and Practice in the Modern World

September 01, 2026 – December 15, 2026

Vera Shengeliya, Bard College

This course explores disability as a site of political struggle, social construction, and collective resistance. We will examine how disability is shaped by cultural narratives, state systems, and global inequalities especially under authoritarian regimes and how disabled people and their allies have organized for dignity, rights, and justice. Through comparative case studies (Russia, the US, the UK, Sweden), we will engage with questions of institutional violence, reproductive and sexual autonomy, intersectionality, and community care. Grounded in the instructor's experience as a disability rights activist, this course offers space for reflection, critical analysis, and envisioning transformative futures.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Ecotourism and Environmental Conservation

August 25, 2026 – December 08, 2026

Cholponbek Ormukov, American University of Central Asia

The Ecotourism course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the principles, practices and impacts of ecotourism in the context of sustainable development and environmental conservation. This course delves into the definition of ecotourism, its core values and the key components that distinguish it from conventional tourism, such as environmental sustainability, cultural sensitivity and community participation. Students will explore the history and evolution of ecotourism, its role in protecting natural habitats, preserving wildlife and raising environmental awareness among travellers. The course also examines the economic, social and cultural impacts of ecotourism on local communities, emphasizing the importance of balancing conservation efforts with tourism industry development. Key topics include responsible travel practices, the role of tour operators and governments in promoting ecotourism and examples of successful ecotourism initiatives around the world. The course will also examine the challenges facing the ecotourism industry, such as overtourism, environmental degradation and the risks of cultural commercialization. Students will gain practical knowledge of developing and managing ecotourism projects that benefit both the environment and local communities. By the end of the course, students will have a deep understanding of

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the principles underlying sustainable tourism practices and will be equipped with the knowledge to contribute to the development of ecotourism as a tool for environmental protection, economic development and cultural exchange. This course is ideal for those pursuing a career in environmental science, tourism or community development.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

European Union Law and Human Rights

August 24, 2026 – December 23, 2026

Bhole Nath and Kanykei Kasybekova, American University of Central Asia

European Union Law and Human Rights will be divided into two main sections. In the first section, students will be exposed to the composition, function, and powers of the European Union's legislative and executive branches, including the human rights issues within the European Union. The course introduces students to the legal system and institutions of the European Union, its interaction with Member States' law and policy. During this course, we will specifically address basic principles and rules of the European Union with a focus on decision-making, supremacy, and, importantly, human rights. In the second section of the course, we will specifically cover the Council of Europe and European Human Rights Law, exploring the legal process and substantive law pursuant to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

GIS Application in Environmental Management

September 07, 2026 – October 09, 2026

Sagynbek Orunbaev, American University of Central Asia

This course provides an opportunity for students to develop a solid understanding of basic theories and analytical methods in Geographic Information Science. Students are also expected to strengthen their GIS skills through hands-on labs, exercises, and course projects. Putting these two aspects together, students of this course should measure their accomplishments in terms of an overall growth and maturity in modeling/analytical skills and problem-solving abilities using GIS. Successful completion of this course should mean that you have become a qualified GIS user.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

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Global Climate Restoration: Culture, Behavior, and Human Rights Frameworks

August 25, 2026 – December 15, 2026

Felix Kaputu, Simon's Rock at Bard College

This interdisciplinary course explores how anthropological, psychological, and human rights frameworks can tackle the urgent global challenge of climate change. Students will examine human behavior, cultural practices, and international protocols while learning to formulate innovative, sustainable solutions. Through readings, discussions, case studies, and projects, the course will offer theoretical and practical tools to motivate environmental restoration.

Prerequisites: Students should have attended Seminar 1 and/or Seminar 2 or equivalent courses.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Global Narratives on Palestine

September 14, 2026 – December 23, 2026

Ibrahim Marazka, Al-Quds Bard College

The course interrogates narratives about Palestine from different places and positionalities. The question of Palestine is - for better or worse - a global issue, and over the decades much has been produced about it in different languages, geographies, disciplines and media (text, film, pictures, etc.) Some of these narratives are by Palestinians, others are not. Major narratives will be presented, and their interrogation will follow according to three main contexts: (1) their epistemic strengths and limitations, (2) their response to questions of justice and morality, and (3) their conceptions of liberation. By centering Palestine and interrogating the narratives about it, students will become familiar with the Question of Palestine, develop critical thinking skills in recognizing/understanding/analyzing narratives, develop understanding of global perspectives on a singular issue, probe and use interdisciplinary methods dealing with multi-medial materials. The NCC will be offered as a Global Humanities Certificate course that satisfies the requirement 'Global Issue Centered Course.'

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

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Governing Algorithms: Bias, Fairness, and the Law

October 05, 2026 – December 21, 2026

Inesa Stolper, European Humanities University

This course examines the governance of algorithmic systems with particular attention to bias, fairness, and their legal implications. It explores how algorithmic decision-making can reproduce or amplify discrimination and analyzes the legal, regulatory, and ethical mechanisms developed to address these risks. The course situates questions of algorithmic fairness within broader frameworks of global artificial intelligence regulation and governance. Students will examine how legal systems and policy instruments respond to challenges posed by AI systems, including AI-generated content, privacy and data protection, as well as questions of liability and accountability.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Historical Memory and the Politics of Memory

September 03, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Yurii Latysh, Smolny Beyond Borders

This course is dedicated to historical memory as part of national identity. Today, the state, using the means of appropriate policy and management, is an influential actor of national memory. The course involves a comparative analysis of politics of history and memory. We will analyse the Memory Turn, finding out why the influence of the past on our lives is important and why that influence is growing.

For course participants, a background in the social sciences and humanities is an advantage. The course provides for the study of theoretical aspects of historical and collective memory (concepts of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Aleida Assmann). Different segments of the course focus on models of memory politics in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, North and Latin America, Israel, China and other regions. We will also look at the categories of collective guilt and responsibility using the example of post-Nazi Germany. Participants should have a good command of English in order to read scholarly texts fluently.

As a result of this course, participants will learn to analyse national historical myths as components of national and security policies, to recognise the manipulation of the past, the causes of memory wars, etc.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

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History of Globalisation since 1300

September 08, 2026 – December 22, 2026

Victor Apryshchenko, Bard College

This course is not a survey of "world history" as a totalizing narrative. Rather, it is an analytical study of how connections between different parts of the world have been formed, structured, facilitated, and disrupted throughout history. The *longue durée* approach examines global connectivity by tracing the emergence, transformation, and breakdown of transregional linkages, from the Mongol Empire's transcontinental networks to contemporary forms of global interdependence. Rather than presenting the world as a unified historical field, the course focuses on the infrastructures, forces, and barriers that have shaped interactions between regions, including trade routes, imperial governance, military expansion, ecological systems, ideological regimes, technological mediation, and cultural translation. Drawing on world-systems theory and global history approaches, the course asks how earlier forms of connectivity produced enduring patterns of integration, hierarchy, dependency, and fragmentation that continue to structure the modern world. Through a comparative study of empires, including the Persian, Ottoman, British, Russian, and Soviet, the course analyzes the shifting dynamics between the core and the periphery, the mechanisms of governance, the legal and cultural frameworks, and the role of administration, gender, and knowledge production in enabling or constraining global linkages. From the Black Death's restructuring of Eurasian exchanges to contemporary pandemics, the course examines recurring cycles of connection and rupture. Extending into the 20th and 21st centuries, the course explores how colonialism, decolonization, the Cold War, transnational corporations, and digital infrastructures reconfigured global relations rather than simply "globalizing" the world. Decolonization is examined as both the dismantling of imperial systems and the reorganization of global inequalities and dependencies. The course also explores the role of international institutions

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Human Rights and Decolonization

September 14, 2026 – December 10, 2026

Haroun Rahimi, American University of Afghanistan

This course stimulates critical thinking and contemplation regarding the position of international human rights law and its significance in the global community. It explores the possibilities of decolonizing human rights law by critically examining

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legal practices through the perspectives of colonial and post-colonial theories. The course will delve into topics such as addressing the historical effects of colonialism through redress and reparation, and assessing the degree to which these practices are currently embedded in the language of human rights.

Prerequisite: Any prior human rights course.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Human Rights Defenders and Advocates

October 05, 2026 – December 21, 2026

Liudmila Ulyashyna, European Humanities University

This seminar serves as an introduction to human rights advocacy, with a practical component. Half of the course focuses on the history and theory of human rights. What is it to make claims for human rights, or to denounce suffering or rights violation, especially on behalf of others? How and when and why have individuals and groups spoken out, mounted campaigns, published reports and exposés? How do they address, challenge, and sometimes work with governments and international organizations like the United Nations, particularly through transnational advocacy networks? What allows some campaigns to succeed while others fail? As we look at human rights advocacy from the campaign to abolish the slave trade to the founding of Amnesty International and the advent of digital activism, this half of the course serves as an introduction to human rights work as a mode of legal, political and cultural practice. The other half of the course involves hands-on work with the human rights organization Scholars at Risk (SAR) to support detained and disappeared scholars connected to the SAR Scholars in Prison Program. We will research events and individuals, communicate with families and lawyers and other advocates, write country and case profiles, propose strategies and tactics for pressuring governments and other powerful actors, and develop appeals to public opinion -- all while recognizing the ethical and political risks this work may involve.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Introduction to Environmental Management and Sustainable Development

August 24, 2026 – December 16, 2026

Mairambek Nurgaziev, American University of Central Asia

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This course is an introduction to ecological, economic, political, and sociocultural perspectives on relationships between humans and the rest of the natural world. Environmental Management is concerned not only with the impact of humankind on the planet but also with the patterns of human behavior necessary to preserve and manage the environment in a self-sustaining way. Study is linked to the areas of new thinking in environmental management, environmental economics and the quest for alternative technologies. It provides students an interdisciplinary survey of the broad range of contemporary environmental issues and concepts. In the course, students will examine options for developing more sustainable communities and lifestyles in the face of local and global change.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Introduction to Middle Eastern Cinema

September 21, 2026 – December 08, 2026

Persheng Vaziri, Afghan Female Student Outreach

An introductory survey class that critically reviews films produced in the Middle East, and explores the culture and the modern history of the region. In this class we will view films from the Arab world, as well as films from Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan. We explore the colonial influence in the region and efforts towards independence and modernization, reflected in the films and the film industry of various countries.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Introduction to Narrative Inquiry: What's in a Story?

September 07, 2026 – December 14, 2026

Cathy Raymond, American University of Afghanistan

This online qualitative research methodology course explores Narrative Inquiry through readings, discussion, and the design of collaborative narrative research projects. Research groups (2-4 students per group) will be formed Week 4. The central project in this qualitative methodology course is a collaborative digital narrative research portfolio. The portfolio project will also include group oral presentations at the end of the course. One of the central premises of Narrative Inquiry is that the story is central to human experience and that we seek to understand our lived experiences by creating storied narratives. Narrative researchers also understand that an individual's life story does not emerge in a vacuum but is, rather, deeply connected to the social, familial, linguistic, institutional, cultural, and other systems within which individual experience is shaped and expressed. Because

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of this contextualized nature of lived experience, students will design collaborative cross-cultural narrative research projects which emphasize civic engagement with the storied experiences of a small number of participants within their local and/or international communities. Students will also have opportunities to deepen their intercultural competencies and strengthen cross-cultural collaborations by practicing interviews, data analysis, and other research strategies during class. The final e-portfolio project will also be completed as a group project. Narrative inquiry offers a multidisciplinary approach to qualitative research which has had diverse applications across numerous areas of study, including psychology, the humanities, education, law, medicine, and more. Narrative inquiry offers a powerful research approach for collaborating cross-culturally with participants, for developing greater appreciation of a variety of local and global experiences, for working towards social justice and transformation, and for challenging stereotypes through counter-stories.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Investment Law, Climate Change Solutions, and Sustainable Development

August 28, 2026 – December 18, 2026

Begaiym Esenkulova, American University of Central Asia

This course is focused on the legal aspects of foreign direct investment (FDI), climate change solutions, and sustainable development. As the world is moving towards the new generation of investment promotion and regulation in the age of climate change, the comprehension of this field of law has become essential. International investment law can help in addressing the problem of climate change and the advancement of green energy transition. Yet, it can also hinder climate action if it is not properly aligned with climate goals. Therefore, investment treaties, legislation, and contracts must be subject to climate-oriented reform. Similarly, while FDI can promote states' economic development, it can also cause serious environmental and social problems. Considering that FDI may have a double-edged impact, it is important to balance investment protection and the advancement of host states' sustainable development via a proper legal framework. Classes are aimed at providing students with the knowledge and critical understanding of the current investment law regime and how it may be leveraged for sustainable development and effective climate action. Special attention is paid to the study of the national legislation of various states, key multilateral and bilateral investment agreements, investment contracts, and major arbitration cases.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

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Islam, Gender, and Social Justice: Global Perspectives and Local Realities

September 01, 2026 – December 14, 2026

Sayed Mohammad Mohaqqueq, American University of Afghanistan

This course examines the relationship between Islam, gender, and social justice in diverse global contexts, with particular attention to Afghanistan. Students explore how Islamic texts and traditions shape understandings of gender roles, rights, and ethical responsibility. The course provides theoretical and methodological tools to help students distinguish between religious teachings, cultural practices, and political interpretations, and to critically analyze debates about authority, law, and social norms. Students study both classical and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an, including reformist and feminist perspectives, alongside current discussions on gender equality and human rights. They analyze how gender norms are understood, interpreted, and negotiated within Islamic frameworks, and how individuals and communities exercise ethical agency using moral, legal, and religious reasoning. The course engages classical scholarship, contemporary Muslim thinkers, and Afghan perspectives, with an emphasis on gender-justice approaches within Islamic discourse. Students also examine lived experiences and practical initiatives that address inequality and promote social justice. Through guided reflection, discussion, and applied projects, students develop strong analytical skills and the ability to propose context-sensitive and ethically grounded solutions.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Literature and Art from the Soviet Union

August 25, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Maryna Batsman, American University of Central Asia

This course surveys major literature and art produced in the Soviet Union from the 1917 Revolution to its dissolution in 1991. It explores key movements in prose, poetry, painting, and film—from modernism through socialist realism to postmodernism—examining their evolution alongside historical and political change. Readings include short works by Mayakovsky, Semenko, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Babel, Grossman, and Shalamov, as well as novellas by Bulgakov and Yerofeyev. Artistic movements covered range from avant-garde (Ekster, Sinyakova, Stepanova, Eisenstein) to Central Asian socialist realism (Chuikov, Aytiev) and non-conformist art (Kabakov, Kuryokhin, Bulatov). The course analyzes the complex and shifting

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relationship between the artist and the state, focusing on how sociopolitical conditions shaped creative expression. A central aim is to expand the canon by including overlooked and underappreciated works from Soviet regional centers such as Almaty, Tashkent, Minsk, and Kyiv. By integrating these into the curriculum alongside canonical chefs-d'œuvre, the course challenges the traditional Moscow-centric narrative and highlights the cultural diversity of the Soviet experience. The syllabus also foregrounds minority perspectives—Armenian, Ukrainian, Kyrgyz, and Jewish—enriching the understanding of Soviet cultural history. Women's voices are examined across media including literature, fine art, film, and architecture, offering comparative insights into gendered artistic production. All texts, films, and music are provided in English or with English subtitles.

Prerequisite: First Year Seminar and English Composition for Liberal Arts I and II courses (or an equivalent English language liberal arts course).

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Modernism and Modernity in Global Perspective

September 09, 2026 – December 23, 2026

Jeffrey Taylor, European Humanities University

The first part of the course will focus on the phenomenon of Modernity in a global perspective, which is the rapidly changing world of the 19th and 20th Centuries. In this first section we look at the disorienting changes brought about by rapid urbanization and industrialization and how those led to new ideologies of imperialism, nationalism, and socialism. The second section of the course considers the artistic response to these forces that we can call Modernism. We look at the forms this movement took in architecture, applied arts, literature, visual arts, music, and film. The course will have two major assessments, one for each of the two sections. These can be in the form of a research paper, or students are also encouraged to develop an individual project of a more creative approach that explores key figures and movements related to the course's subject matter.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Middle East

August 24, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Hidayet Siddikoglu, American University of Afghanistan

This course aims to equip students with the necessary tools—core theories, key concepts, and case studies—to apply critical reasoning in analyzing diverse

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real-world conflicts and to assess practical pathways toward durable solutions to some of the most pressing violent situations of the twenty-first century. It pays particular attention to protracted and evolving conflicts in the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, the Israel–Palestine context, and wider regional dynamics involving Iran, examining how these crises shape patterns of violence, displacement, governance, and human security. The course also explores approaches to conflict analysis and resolution that seek to transform unjust, violent, and oppressive conditions into more equitable and nonviolent strategies, while identifying, deconstructing, and critically evaluating the structures and narratives that sustain violent environments.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Perspectives on Global Inequalities

August 25, 2026 – December 08, 2026

Mahendran Chokkalingam, American University of Central Asia

This interdisciplinary course explores the causes, consequences, and historical aspects of global inequalities. The course begins by examining the concepts of inequality and how it is produced, maintained and reproduced in the modern world through foundational and contemporary theories. Building on these concepts, the course integrates various dimensions like colonialism, gender, race and class to examine the categorical nature of global inequality. The course draws on sociology, anthropology and political theory to present a holistic understanding on the issue. Examining case studies across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America through ethnographies the course situates inequalities within specific historical, cultural and political contexts demonstrating how structures of power operate in both global and local level. To ground the theories and concepts in lived experience, this course heavily relies on case studies and everyday observations for grounded perspectives on global inequalities.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Religions of the World: Histories and Possible Futures

September 07, 2026 – December 18, 2026

Bruce Matthews, Bard Early Colleges

Some have argued that our species is better characterized by its religious traits (Homo religio) than its wisdom (Homo sapien). Religion, it seems, is a force in human history more powerful than any other. A force, however, that historically frequently

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reveals itself as a divisive and destructive power, rather than a transformative force for human flourishing and peace. A sober survey of our current global situation vis-à-vis the roles played by our many religious traditions can support a critical appraisal of the positive role religion could or should play in the future. Contrary to their proclaimed ideals, contemporary religions seem to divide us and degrade our efforts to create a better world. But how can this be, given that our major religious traditions advocate the very ideals that should bring an end to hatred and conflict? It is this paradox that we shall undertake to examine this semester, specifically making use of both philosophy and history to explore ways of channeling the energy stored in the global religious traditions toward peace and harmony. Central to this inquiry is the complex relationship between faith and reason. Building from this distinction, we will explore the boundaries between holy and profane, sacred and secular. Students will gain familiarity with major religious traditions while developing a philosophical framework—a shared vocabulary—for understanding and evaluating their competing claims, as we all work together towards pursuing the development of what Eliade calls “a new humanism, on a world-wide scale.” Readings will be drawn from classical and contemporary primary and secondary sources in religion, philosophy and philosophical theology.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Screenwriting and Human Rights

September 01, 2026 – December 15, 2026

Lisa Katzman, Bard College

Human rights, whether individual or collective, are the underpinning of much human conflict and for that reason, a foundation of dramatic art. In this course students will write a short screenplay (approximately 30 pages in length) exploring a human rights issue of their choice. As well as learning the structural elements of dramatic writing, we will critically examine—and students will give presentations—on assigned films and related readings that explore human rights conflicts from various perspectives.

More than any other cultural medium cinema has shaped and defined the post-WWII modern era throughout the globe. In spite of and because of Hollywood's domination of the global marketplace for movies, robust national film industries developed throughout the world in the very earliest days of cinema: in India, France, Germany, then throughout Africa, South America, New Zealand, Australia, the Caribbean, among other countries and regions. The development of many national cinemas contain the seeds of resistance and opposition to western colonization,

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American cultural and political hegemony, and the tropes and stereotypes these ideologies engendered in Hollywood films. This is not to suggest that Hollywood lacks its own complex social history of directors, writers, and actors whose work has offered scathing social critiques of the American status quo both at home and abroad—targeting jingoism and deeply embedded forms of racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and political prejudice. In “Screenwriting and Human Rights” we will focus on films and screenplays drawn from global and American cinema that relate to human rights—from the deeply personal to the politically complex. Within the context of studying these works, students will develop their own short screenplays.
Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Scrolling Through Lies: Disinformation on Social Media

September 01, 2026 – November 26, 2026

Fahmidul Haq, Bard College

The consequences of disinformation on social media impact politics, culture, science, and everyday life. In this course, students will work to understand and critically analyze the disinformation phenomena in the digital sphere. They will explore the historical roots of propaganda, the economic and algorithmic structures of social media platforms, and the psychological factors that shape belief and persuasion. Through global case studies, including elections, public health crises, and digital activism, the course analyzes how fake news or misleading information spreads and why it is effective. The course integrates theoretical frameworks in media analysis, fact-checking, and critical digital literacy. By the end of the course, students will be equipped to critically assess the digital media ecosystems and propose strategies to counter disinformation to reinstate a fact-based society.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Social Entrepreneurship

September 14, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Dalia Najjar, Al-Quds Bard College

This is a collaborative, cross-institution course in social entrepreneurship, where student teams ideate and develop start-up businesses models designed to solve pressing social and environmental problems. Social enterprise solutions can be either for-profit, or non-profit. The course features a global classroom, with students enrolled convening each week in a common zoom space to share ideas. Past certificate courses have incubated real business start-ups at BRAC University in

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Bangladesh, Al Quds University in Palestine, and at Bard College in New York. The course culminates in a “shark tank for sustainability” among and between teams from the different universities. The course includes readings and discussion focused on social issues related to entrepreneurship: drivers of change, from decarbonization to AI; delinking growth from material throughput; urban-based innovation ecosystems; social obstacles to risk taking; working on multi-disciplinary teams; language, power and gender dynamics in entrepreneurship; deconstructing the archetypes of entrepreneurship. The practice of social entrepreneurship explores the full suite of liberal learning: critical analysis, persuasive writing, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, design thinking, and group social dynamics.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

Sustainable Development: Natural Resources Governance

September 01, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Pavel Kononenko, Smolny Beyond Borders

There is a widely held belief that the power and success of a state's development directly depend on how well it is endowed with natural resources. Many people assume that the more oil, gas, coal, and metals a country possesses, the greater its opportunities for ensuring sustainable economic and political development, improving citizens' well-being, and strengthening its prestige on the international stage. But is this really the case? Why do civil wars break out in African countries rich in diamonds and oil? Why are countries that export hundreds of millions of tons of oil and gas not among the leaders in terms of living standards, while such leaders are often countries that, as a rule, have to import resources? Why is Norway an exception to this rule?

This course addresses these and other questions at the intersection of political science, political economy, and policy analysis. By exploring economic models and theories, we will examine how resource endowment influences various aspects of social and political life through concrete case studies. We will read, think, and discuss decisions made at the local, national, and international levels to ensure economic development, social progress, and ecological balance. Topics will include the resource curse theory and UN's Sustainable Development Goals, regional conflicts and insurgencies, civil society initiatives and global cartels, Botswana and Norway, nuclear energy and avocados.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

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Telling Stories About Rights

August 31, 2026 – December 16, 2026

Thomas Bartscherer, Bard College

What can fiction tell us about human rights? And what can we learn about fiction and literature by focusing on themes of justice and injustice, suffering and struggle, oppression and resistance? This course will focus on a wide range of fiction, from a variety of writers and filmmakers with different backgrounds and from different parts of the world, that tell compelling stories about individual rights and communal experiences of justice and injustice. We will look at the ways in which literary forms can present and interrogate universalizing claims, and how themes such as political oppression, forced migration, disenfranchisement, racism, poverty, and lack of access to education and health care can affect the dignity of all humans. Readings may include: Sophocles' *Antigone*; Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*; Modiano's *Dora Bruder*, Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*, Camus' *The Plague*; *The Island* by Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona; and Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*. Film screenings may include *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo), *Hotel Rwanda* (Terry George), and *This is Not a Film* (Jafar Panahi). In addition to literary analysis, students will conduct and present original research on contemporary forms of storytelling in relation to human rights.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

The Multidimensional Legitimation Strategies of Authoritarian Regimes

September 14, 2026 – November 30, 2026

Francesca Chiarvesio, Bard College

The course offers a general introduction to political legitimacy and legitimation strategies in authoritarian contexts. The aim is to familiarize students with the scholarship on democratic backsliding and mechanisms of manipulation, co-optation, and repression of public opinion, elites, and opposition. The course is timely as it provides tools to understand the current global wave of democratic backsliding, and the institutional, ideological, and performance-based reasons underpinning the resilience of authoritarianism. By offering an overview of scholarship on political legitimacy, this course equips students with the tools to critically consider democratic backsliding and counteract it. No prerequisites are

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necessary. This course is suitable for undergraduate students of any discipline. It emphasizes critical engagement with readings, discussion-based learning, and oral and written assignments aligning with GHEA's commitment to academic rigor, open dialogue, and cross-campus scholarly community.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

The Politics of Home

September 02, 2026 – December 16, 2026

Zahid Rafiq, Bard College

The home is the familiar, a place of safety; it is the nest, the hatchery, the fortress; it is where one rests and hides away from the dangerous and alien world. But what if beneath its accepted and intimate rhythms, home hides sinister things, prejudices, violences, echoes of strange cries, often even in plain view. Do we even see the violence at home, or are we so accustomed to it that we cannot even see it? Do we speak against it if we see it, or do we accept it as the natural way of things and do our part to preserve and continue the order at home? Are there dictators at home, fascists and resistance fighters too? How do various members partake in the politics at home? What keeps a home a home and what threatens it? And what happens in homes when the world around is on fire, and when even with the windows closed, we hear cries, not sure if they come from the outside or inside? In this course, we will read texts where violence is part of the structure of home, where politics is what happens at and as home, and we will look at class, at gender, money, ideology, love, hate, and at the human condition.

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS

The Representation of Justice in Films

September 04, 2026 – December 11, 2026

Sabine El Chamaa, Bard College

This course proposes to look at the intersection between Justice and cinema by exploring seminal international fiction and non-fiction films that reveal how representations of justice and injustice are intrinsically linked to moving images. The course critically engages with the historical (and current) role of film in representing the court, and with questions of 'right and wrong, namely of morality as represented in film, and examines the changing historical and cultural notions of justice and injustice. The course also supports students in questioning ideologies inherent in the politics of representation. Students may wish to explore this partly practical, partly

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theoretical course as a hands-on tool and respond with projects of their own, or as a means to expand on their theoretical writings. The course will require film viewings and will be taught through a combination of lectures and debates.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

United Nations and Multi-lateral Diplomacy

September 14, 2026 – December 18, 2026

Shoaib Timory, American University of Afghanistan

Since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has played a vital role in promoting international law, peace, and global order. Although it has not been able to prevent all conflicts, it is difficult to imagine the scale of global instability without the UN system. Through its specialized agencies, the UN has built an extensive framework of cooperation and support among member states in areas such as environmental protection, public health, human rights, refugee protection, and labor rights. A key example is the role of the World Health Organization in combating COVID-19 and distributing vaccines to developing countries. This course explores how the United Nations functions, how states negotiate and compromise within the UN system, and how rival countries reach consensus on complex global issues. It also examines the UN's central role in shaping international law and advancing multilateral diplomacy, both within and beyond the UN framework. Another important topic covered in this course is sanctions. Students will study the UN sanctions regime, as well as unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), with a special focus on sanctions imposed on the Taliban in Afghanistan. Given the significant role the UN has played in Afghanistan and its potential impact in the future, this course provides students with in-depth knowledge and practical insights into UN diplomacy and international cooperation. In addition, the course examines the impact of US withdrawal from UN agencies and the impact of President Trump's Peace Council on the future of the UN.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Women Playwrights Speak Their Truths: A Call to Activism

August 31, 2026 – December 09, 2026

Aimée Michel, Simon's Rock at Bard College

Across the world, the voices of women continue to be marginalized or silenced. Our stories are not considered relevant. They are “women’s stories.” Yet those women

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identifying writers who have broken through speak truths that are revelatory and vital. This course celebrates women playwrights across the spectrum of age, race, sexual identification, and varying cultural backgrounds, from the 1970s to 2026, who have often worked in marginalized spaces due to the political, confrontational style and content of their writing. Students will co-lead class discussions, which will address the historical moment when the plays were written as well as each playwright's use of language and literary style as we read the work together out loud. Each week, a pair of students from two different institutions will be asked to research and introduce the playwright we are reading that week, starting off our discussion of the play.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Women Rights, Human Rights, and International Law

September 14, 2026 – December 17, 2026

Fereshta Abbasi, American University of Afghanistan

The course explores the intricate issues encompassing women's rights including social, political, economic, and legal dimensions.

Credits: 3 US / 6 ECTS

Writing the Future: Creative Leadership for a Better World

September 01, 2026 – December 10, 2026

Jennifer Browdy, Simon's Rock at Bard College

This interdisciplinary course is part of the growing field of environmental humanities, combining research in environmental science and social science with creative writing and collaborative storytelling. It invites students to shine the light of their creative imaginations on the serious environmental and social challenges we face as a global community in the 21st century, drawing on the pioneering work of leading philosophers, theorists, creative writers and transition practitioners such as Rupert Read, Christiana Figueres, Denise Baden, Rob Hopkins, Otto Scharmer, Erica Chenoweth, Joanna Macy and others. Research in current challenges facing the sustainable future of humanity on Earth will culminate in students producing collaborative “State of the World” and “Vision of the World That Could Be” reports, drawing on research in the solutions—both scientific and social—that could lead us to a sustainable, thriving future. Deploying research in environmental and climate

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communications as well as skill-building in creative writing, the final project will be a work of throtopian fiction, in which students will envision their best possible future scenario and write a short story or novella that tells a story of how innovators, visionaries and ordinary people working together were able to lead the way from today's challenges to a brighter future. No prerequisites. 200 (Intermediate) Level

Credits: 4 US / 8 ECTS