In the 1735 verse epistle he addressed to his doctor, Alexander Pope claimed that the muse only served to “help [him] thro’ this long Disease, my Life.” But Pope’s “Disease” is never just his personal disability, but always also his lifelong uneasiness with the rapidly changing culture around him. The growth of cities, the spread of empire, the triumph of consumer culture: each of these seemed to spawn a host of ills afflicting individual bodies. This course will examine eighteenth-century representations of disease on both the individual and the cultural level, with the understanding that the two can never be wholly separated.

Topics to be covered may include: the role of disease in the conquest and settlement of the Americas; pathologies of long distance travel, such as scurvy and nostalgia (considered a physical ailment at the time); the place of medicine in Caribbean slave culture; plague and the emergence of statistics; the miseries supposedly brought on by the rising tide of luxury; and the mental woes of melancholy and mania. We may also consider the sites associated with disease and its cure: the ship, the plantation, the spa, the hospital, the madhouse. Authors to be read may include: Pope, Swift, Defoe, Smollett, Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Cowper, Matthew Lewis, and Charles Brockden Brown. We will also read a number of different critical approaches to these issues, and be concerned throughout with the methodological issues involved with studying the historical intersections of literature and medicine.

According to a well-known--and largely accurate--narrative, the study of “aesthetics” was invented in the eighteenth century, and then consolidated in the Romantic era. This course is intended to provide an introduction to this narrative of the emergence of aesthetics as a realm of study, and we will accordingly focus on the classic three categories of eighteenth-century and Romantic aesthetic theory—the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime—as well as classic Romantic aesthetic methods, such as irony and reflexivity. We will also consider several more “minor” Romantic aesthetic categories that have increasingly come to the fore in recent literary and media criticism (e.g., “the monstrous”). We will employ Immanuel Kant’s monumental and synthetic late work, *The Critique of Judgment*, as a lens through which we can reflect on both earlier eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and the distinctive emergence of “Romantic” aesthetic theory. While the course will focus on aesthetic theory, we will also parse this theory through case studies drawn from eighteenth-century and Romantic-era literature and art. Readings will be drawn primarily from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British, French, and German authors, including Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Uvedale Price, G. E. Lessing, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller, Jane Austen, P. B. Shelley, Mary Shelley, and G. W. F. Hegel. We will also consider select readings from a small number of key twentieth-century philosophical reflections on Romantic aesthetics, including those of Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Rancière.

Students interested in this course are also encouraged to considered signing up for Professor Gabriel Trop’s GERM 860: Aesthetics and Poetry (which meets on Tuesdays from 4:40-7:10 on UNC’s campus), as these two courses have been designed to complement one another, with Professor Trop’s class also beginning in the eighteenth century but then spending more time on twentieth-century aesthetic theory.
This course will focus on contemporary fictions that in some sense qualify as “experimental.” In some cases, the narrative is so unconventional that it is difficult to recover a narrative trajectory from it; in others, the author is bending the conventions that surround the book as a technological form, for example by making the book’s physical form reflect the passions of a character. In still others, the fictions take advantage of digital textuality to experiment with color, animation, images, graphic design and hypertext linking, as in the emerging field called electronic literature (literature written on a computer and meant to be read on a computer). As a group, these fictions interrogate the cultural assumptions of the media that instantiate them, bringing to the reader’s attention the ways in which media interact with content. The course will interrogate these relations across print and digital texts, with the goal of arriving at more nuanced, insightful, energetic and zestful engagements with the infinite varieties of liter ary textuality. Texts include David Markham’s Wittgenstein’s Mistress, Jess Stoner’s I Have Blinded Myself Writing This, J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst’s S., Horowitz, Derby and Moffett’s The Silent History, and selections from the Electronic Literature Collections I and II. Participants will be asked to write two short and one longer essay or course project. Assignments will include exploring the Electronic Literature archives of the Duke Library.

This course reviews and revises theories of genre through a close examination of a traditionally arch-American genre of whiteness, Westerns, as adapted by black writers and other artists. We will investigate how visual and verbal citation, parody, pastiche and other techniques distort and/or deepen a genre. Scholars like Manthia Diawara, bell hooks, Laura Mulvey and Jacqueline Stewart have taught us to look for resistant spectatorship where the ideology of films excludes and/or explicitly denigrates the viewer. In this course we will ask how racialized and colonized spectators saw themselves differently after having encountered the classic cinematic figures of the cowboy, the outlaw, and the American Indian.

Our study of genre will include both film studies (Rick Altman, Laura Mulvey, Richard Dyer etc) and literary scholarship (Caroline Levine, Northrop Frye, etc). Because Westerns are so sharply focused on masculinity, we will give particular attention to how gender and genre intersect. To contextualize our readings, we may draw on William Katz’s The Black West (1987) and Quintard Taylor’s In Search of the Racial Frontier (1999), Michael K. Johnson’s Black Masculinity and Frontier Myth in American Literature (2002) and Blake Allmendinger’s Imagining the African American West (2005) to supplement general histories by Richard Slotkin, Richard White and Patricia Limerick et al.

A significant portion of the course will examine variations and critiques of the American frontier myth composed outside the U.S. We’ll examine the genre’s impact on global black masculinities in the wake of (de-)colonization, capitalism, and urbanization. Can we learn more about the genre’s focus on tensions between individual freedom and societal bonds when we examine how Black artists reckon with the violence of settler colonial confrontations with indigenous populations, the institution and policing of new borders, and struggles over land rights?
This course looks closely at some major theoretical attempts to explain how novels formulated a world that can be inhabited (or not) in specific ways by historically and culturally diverse and variable readerships. We’ll begin with Lukács and Bakhtin and then see what happens to their arguments when challenged in quick succession by structuralism, poststructuralism, and theories of globalization. You will find that not all the theoretical works that we consider qualify as theories of the novel, strictly speaking. Even so, these theories invariably use particular novels to produce their critical theoretical models of the modern world, and novels often return the favor. We’ll be looking at this interplay of fiction and theory.

This class will explore changing theories of nature and the human by examining four conceptual clusters in their historical moments: state of nature and natural rights and law (colonial encounter and the Enlightenment), evolution and ecology (mid-19th century), degeneration and eugenics (late-19th/early-20th century), and biopolitics and biotechnology (mid-20th century). We will start by considering how changing ideas about “nature” informed such concepts as “natural law” and “natural rights” and how they evolved through the idea and settlement of “America.” Ranging across oceans, genres, and media, the class will then focus on key developments in the sciences and political philosophy and their relationship to innovations in the literary and visual arts. Broadly speaking, we will consider the centrality of theories of nature and the human to the co-emergence of scientific and humanistic thinking—of their similarities and antagonisms.

The focus of the first part of the class will be on ideas about the state of nature, the human, and the social contract as they found expression in the idea of “America” and the evolving ideas of “governance” and “environ.” In the remaining three sections, the focus will be on how literary and visual innovations responded to and changed as they engaged ideas about nature and the human. We will explore these concepts and innovations in the mid-19th century in relation to changing landscapes and debates about the uses of space (e.g., the proliferation of railroads and the creation of national parks; revolutions in architecture and urban planning and the design of New York’s Central Park). In the third section, we will look at how discourses of degeneration and eugenics both informed and were informed by late-19th century literary naturalism and early-20th century speculative fiction. Section four will build on this foundation by considering the history of the concept of “biopolitics” (and, more broadly, “the politics of life”) in relation to the rise of biotechnology and the emergence of the idea of environmental justice and the recent debates about the Anthropocene.

The course will include discussions not only of the topics covered by the readings, but also of method and approach: how we understand categories such as “theory,” “literature,” “history,” and “popular culture,” and how we might approach them in scholarship and in the classroom. There will also be an emphasis on pedagogy. This class might include such authors as Shakespeare, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson, Emerson, Melville, Thoreau, Darwin, Frederick Douglass, George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jack London, Arthur Machen, H. P. Lovecraft, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Arendt, Fanon, Foucault, Rachel Carson, Octavia Butler, and Marya Montero as well as photography, architecture, and art movements such as the Hudson River School.
This seminar will explore primary and critical writings related to the contested role of images in philosophical theology and --aesthetics, and also in some nineteenth-century literature. Rather than approaching the image from the perspective of art history, our objective is to trace how, beginning in late antiquity, images have functioned and how their role has been conceptualized, first in religious practice and philosophical theology, and more recently in literature, philosophy, aesthetic theory, and phenomenology.

At this time in history, Western culture is arguably awash in images to a degree never before experienced. Digital culture has made every image and visual artifact virtually accessible to a vast number of individuals in the developed and developing worlds. Elaborate databases such as ArtStor and Oxford Art Online, as well as general-purpose search engines (Google Images) facilitate the retrieval of visual materials with very little censorship or accountability interposing itself on the part of the provider or end-user, respectively. At the same time, the capacity of images (cartoons, photographs, paintings) to unleash public controversy by tapping into otherwise submerged religious, political, or cultural energies and antagonisms seems undiminished. More than most textual forms—whose impact is typically attenuated by the hermeneutic demands that their linear and propositional presentation makes on readers—images seem uniquely capable of bypassing or suspending a more guarded and reflexive interpretive appraisal. The traumatic force with which the images of the falling Twin Towers on September 11, 2001 impacted and shaped the political imaginary of an entire generation of people in the United States and the Western world, or similarly iconic moments such as Robert Capra's famous photo of a soldier's death during the Spanish Civil War, Nick Ut's photo of a young Vietnamese child burned by napalm, Charlie Cole's 1989 snapshot of a young man in a white shirt blocking the advance of tanks in Tiananmen Square, Kurt Westergaard's 2005 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed—all attest to the image's undiminished capacity for concentrating and unleashing vast reservoirs of moral and political energy.

It cannot surprise, then, that political and religious establishments around the world are far more preoccupied with controlling (or even expunging) images than with articulating a coherent message or rationally engaging their perceived opponents. Among the more egregious instances of such practice might be the Afghan Taliban's March 2001 decision to detonate the early sixth-century Buddhas of Bamiyan, or the G. W. Bush administration's ban on releasing photos of the coffins of dead soldiers flown back from Iraq. – So as to understand the deeper histories that resonate in such controversies, and indeed set the formal and moral parameters for them, this seminar will seek to undertake an archaeology of the image in its various dimensions: viz., as material object, as a medium (often in close competition with text), as formal-aesthetic artifact, and as the correlate of a distinctive kind of human intentionality.

PART I and PART II of the seminar are outlined in ACES.
A first aim of this class will be to explore Shakespearean tragedy as a "lethal attempt to deny the existence of another as essential to one's own." So tragedy in Shakespeare's handling turns out to explore acknowledgment as the home of our knowledge of others and of ourselves. This class explores Shakespeare's tragedies as a set of meditations on the costs of denying that we share language. Why does this idea become compelling and attractive right then? How is such a denial so much as possible? We will focus on Shakespeare's late tragedies (*King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*), as well as *Hamlet* and *Othello*. We will also ponder the tragic matrix of comedy in plays such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, as well as those plays that begin as tragedies but turn aside from that form: *The Winter's Tale*, and possibly *The Tempest*.

A second aim of the class, and closely connected with the first, is an exploration of ordinary language philosophy (Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell) in relation to theatre. I see a natural affinity between the practices of theater and the practices of ordinary language philosophy because each practice is committed to examining particular words used by particular speakers in particular situations. Each practice understands language as situation, which is different from "context" because sometimes we only understand the context when we understand what it is that is being said. Ordinary language philosophy makes the very radical claim that we will fail to understand what something means until we understand what it does, until we understand the force of the words used on any particular occasion as, say, entreaty, command, order, suggestion, permission, request, prayer. Each practice understands language as act, as event in the world, and so asks us to extend our conception of the work of language beyond the work of representation, the chief focus of historicism old and new.

We will read some central essays of J.L. Austin, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, and especially Part 4 of Stanley Cavell's work: *The Claim of Reason: Skepticism, Morality, Acknowledgment, Tragedy* where we will attempt an exploration of the intimacy of these four terms to each other. This will help us explore tragedy's work between "avoidance and acknowledgment."

This class should be of interest to anyone interested in exploring Shakespeare, tragedy as a genre, theatre, ordinary language philosophy and ethics, and performance studies.