This course is designed to promote high-level reflection on the import of work in the Public Humanities by rigorously investigating two phenomena on which the very concept is founded: the human and the public. Specifically, the course will trace theories of the human as they have developed in a variety of intellectual traditions from antiquity to the present, and of the public in the numerous manifestations that scholars generally contend it has assumed since the early modern period. It will close with some reflections on that nature of scholarly inquiry in the humanities, and the significance of pursuing such inquiry in nonacademic public contexts.

Intended specifically for Humanities PhD candidates interested in bringing their training to bear in a broad range of professional settings, both within and beyond academia, the course is meant to facilitate that objective by sensitizing students to the specific types of publics entailed in those different settings, and to the specific types of human entities—and human endeavors—those settings presume. Class members will ideally complete the semester with an enhanced sense of how they can productively deploy their specialized skills across a wide array of variously “public” spheres of activity.

The course will proceed principally by way of group discussion, propelled by one- to two-page student commentaries on the assigned reading, to be uploaded to the “Forums” section of the NYU Classes website by 5:00pm on the day prior to each class meeting. Each student is required to post eight such response papers over the course of the semester, and these—along with attendance and participation—will account for 25% of the final course grade. Students are additionally required to deliver one 15-minute class presentation on some aspect of one of the assigned readings (also worth 25% of the final grade), and to submit both a 3,000- to 4,000-word midterm essay and a 6,000- to 7,500-word final seminar paper, worth 20% and 30% of the course grade, respectively. The midterm essay may be a preliminary version of the final seminar paper.
Session   Materials to be discussed

1  [Introductory considerations]

THE HUMANS IN THE HUMANITIES

Comparative Perspectives on Human Being

Session   Materials to be discussed


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Session  Materials to be discussed


**Hegemonic Humanism: The Renaissance and After**

Session  Materials to be discussed


**Contestations**

Session  Materials to be discussed

Session  Materials to be discussed

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2015), chapters 1 and 5

VERSIONS OF THE PUBLIC

Foundational Propositions

Session  Materials to be discussed


Revisions and Alternatives

Session  Materials to be discussed


*MIDTERM ESSAY DUE*
Session  Materials to be discussed

9  Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Social Text 25/26 (1990): 56–80

Virtuality, Globalization, and the University

Session  Materials to be discussed

10 Zizi Papacharissi, “The Virtual Public Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere,” New Media & Society 4:1 (February 2002): 9-27
     Nick Couldry, “What and Where is the Transnationalized Public Sphere?” in Kate Nash, ed., Transnationalizing the Public Sphere (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014), 43–59

     Victoria Sit, “The Erosion of the University as a Public Sphere,” Education Canada 48:4 (Fall 2008): 30-33
THE HUMANITIES PER SE AND THE HUMANITIES IN PUBLIC

Definitions and Distinctions

Session Materials to be discussed

Richard Foley, *The Geography of Insight: The Sciences, the Humanities, How They Differ, Why They Matter* (New York: Oxford UP, 2018), chapters 1 and 2, “The Humanities and Sciences Are Different” and “The Distinctions,” 1–6, 7–43

The Public Humanities and Its Problems

Session Materials to be discussed


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*FINAL PAPER DUE*