The course reads plays and novels written in the 17th and 18th centuries from the viewpoint of the history and theory of gender and sexuality, with a focus on social constructionism (M. Foucault, G. Rubin, D. Halperin, J. Butler). Three endogenous categories will be at the center of our attention: “préciosité,” gallantry, and libertinage. We will investigate how these terms are deployed in noteworthy theater plays (by Molière and Corneille) and novels (by La Fayette, Bussy-Rabutin, Vivant Denon, Choderlos de Laclos, and Sade) of the classical age. Examining how préciosité, gallantry and libertinage intersect with marriage in these texts, we will appraise their significance in the genealogy of modern sexuality and in the shaping of notions such as homo-, hetero-, or asexuality.
In the era of #MeToo and #TimesUp, what is left of seduction? As its etymological derivation from the Latin seducere makes evident, seduction signifies the threat of being led astray, suggesting a problematic reorganization of boundaries, activity and passivity, power and weakness. To what extent does seduction affirm an unequal gender logic? Does seduction always imply violence? This seminar aims to confront these questions by revisiting primal scenes of seduction in a variety of literary, psychoanalytical, and philosophical texts. We will start by considering one of the central mythical figures of modernity, Don Juan, in Molière and Da Ponte’s retellings of the story, where seduction takes the form of a gendered performance. Paying particular attention to the theoretical interventions of Shoshana Felman and Judith Butler, we will explore the imaginative links between gender, performance, and seduction.

Taught seminar style. Professor Isabelle Alfandary (Sorbonne Nouvelle, Collège Internationale de Philosophie) will co-teach with Professor Ricciardi the part of the course dedicated to psychoanalysis.
Special Topics in Literature:
The Surreal World

This course offers an introduction to what was arguably the most long-lasting and widespread avant-garde movement of the twentieth century: surrealism. In addition to reading several of the most important figures of Parisian surrealism (Breton, Aragon, Artaud, Bataille), we will explore a variety of affiliated non-European movements in Latin America (particularly Mexico) and Japan, as well the Cairo-based Art and Liberty group and international négritude (in Martinique, Senegal, and Angola).

Our focus will be on manifestos and literary works, but we will also study their close relationship to the visual arts. Students will have the opportunity to develop a research project relevant to their field and/or national area of interest. In addition to our regular seminars, we will also have small-group meetings with several of the scholars whose work we will be reading.

Professor Bush
French 490/CLS 487/GAMS 400/Art_Hist 460 W 3:00-5:50
Topics in Literary Theory
On the Life of Images in the Digital Age

The aim of this course is to introduce graduate students to 20th- and 21st-century theories of visual culture, sound, and media, with special emphasis on the French and German contexts. Rather than attempting a survey, we will work around specific topics—labor, war, surveillance, migration—and trace the ways in which they have been explored by theorists and practitioners alike. We will focus on the relation between art and technology and the shift from analog to digital media as it affects the life of images at the level of both inscription and reception. While considering different kinds of media, we will read texts by Giorgio Agamben, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Bernard Stiegler, and Byung-Chul Han, among others. We will also analyze films by Martin Arnold, Guy Debord, Walid Raad, Hito Steyerl, and Harun Farocki.