

HUM 245: Drones
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Drones are, literally and figuratively, everywhere. To most, drones watch and attack militants -- among others -- in the War on Terror, sometimes with alarming results. But soon, drones will be patrolling our own skies. What exactly is the drone, why does it matter, and how should we, as a society, respond to it? This seminar is an interdisciplinary bid to answer that question. We will explore the drone in literature, beginning with harpies and demigods in ancient Greek mythology, to consider our millennial fear of, and fascination with, the sky. We will consider the drone in the history of warfare, comparing it to previous technological advancements, from the long bow to the hydrogen bomb. We will ask about the ethics and politics of surveillance, and explore the emergence of automated devices for seeing and fighting at a distance. We will complicate the prevailing sinister image of the drone by studying how it can be used as a social good in activism, art, conservation, and disaster relief. The seminar will feature regular guest speakers across a range of disciplines, including faculty members from computer science, human rights, electronic arts, politics, and philosophy, as well as activists and professional analysts. We will examine the contemporary public debate about the drone and, drawing on our broad approach, attempt to intervene in it. Participants will be expected to develop original insights on the topic based on their own academic interests, and articulate those insights in writing.