The modern idea of personal identity has undergone an interdisciplinary migration from classical Greece to modern psychology, with stops along the way in philosophy, religion and literature. How has the idea of self-evolved, and in what ways have the human sciences (psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, and phenomenology) shaped the way we think of the self today?

The first third of the course will cover origins of self in the Old and New Testaments, Aristotle, Seneca, Aquinas, Montaigne, Descartes, Hume, Wordsworth, and Virginia Woolf. The rest of the semester will consider the self in modern human science: James, Dewey, Cooley, Mary Calkins, Freud, George H. Mead, Jung, Margaret Mead, John B. Watson, Martin Buber, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, David Riesman, Robert Jay Lifton, R. D. Laing, Ulrich Neisser, Eleanor Rosch, and Clifford Geertz. We will contrast Western ideas of self with Eastern traditions, loss of self, and divided self.

The class will be conducted as a seminar with brief introductory remarks from the instructor. Students will write four 5-page papers. Each student will present one of their papers to the class.