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What is a Human? New Sciences, the Nature/Culture Divide and Human Rights

HMRT 26400/36400 (=CHDV 26302, ANTH 25225/35225)

Instructor: Noa Vaisman, Human Rights Lecturer

Tues/Thurs, 1:30-2:50 pm

In what ways and to what extent have new technologies such as assisted fertilization, surrogacy and cloning refashioned our basic social and biological categories? How has the internet changed the way we understand ourselves as humans? How does this new scientific knowledge, and its elaborate technological apparatus, inform and complicate our understanding of human rights? These questions are at the core of our explorations in this course. By reading (mostly) ethnographic accounts of new scientific technologies and of knowledge production processes we will challenge essentialist ideas about nature, culture and the human. Using this critical lens we will then be able to explore the challenges these new ways of understanding the world and ourselves pose to current human rights discourse and practice