**“The Ingenious Knight of La Mancha and his Cultural Legacy: Four Centuries of Creativity Inspired by Don Quixote”**

Don Quixote is one of the most famous characters in the history of Western literature. A would-be knight errant enamored of chivalric romances, he ventures into the world in quest for adventure only to become the butt of countless jokes on account of his delusions of grandeur. In his search for lost ideals, reality and fiction are interchangeable and indistinguishable, as epitomized by his fight with windmills and his infatuation with a common peasant girl whom he perceives as the noblest of ladies.

At the core of Cervantes’s satirical, tragi-comic, fiction is a deeply philosophical question: how much can we know the world or anything within it for that matter? Instead of an answer, he offers only a series of narrative situations, each one more preposterous than the other, as if to suggest that any hope of answering that question is an absurdist dream.

This series of lectures explores some of the most important aspects of the cultural legacy of this story – often called the first modern novel - which has inspired countless works by artists, writers, and musicians since its original publication more than four hundred years ago.

**Lecture 1: The Moment of Don Quixote**

**Aneta Georgievska-Shine**

What was it that led to the creation of Don Quixote in the first place? Why was it written in Spain, around 1600? What does this novel tell us about the literary milieu of Cervantes? What do its themes and their treatment tell us about some of the cultural anxieties of his era? These are some of the questions we will be addressing in the first lecture within our series.

Title pages of the 1606 and 1616 editions of Don Quixote, Spain

Various illustrated editions of Don Quixote, 17th century (Dutch, French English)

Title page of Lazarillo de Tormes, 1554 (Picaresque Fiction)

Francisco Herrera ej Viejo, Picaros, 1640

Hieronymus Bosch, Garden of Earthly delights (Hell panel), ca. 1505, Prado

Jusepe de Ribera, The Philosopher Thales, 1630’s, Private coll.

Jusepe de Ribera, Diogenes, 1637, Dresden

Jusepe de Ribera, Clubfooted Boy, 1642, Paris

Bartolome Esteban Murillo, The Young Beggar, ca. 1645, Louvre

Bartolome Esteban Murillo, A Girl and her Duena, ca. 1670’s, NGA, Washington

Antonio de Pereda, The Knight’s Dream, 1650, Museo del Academia de San Fernando, Madrid