

Introduction to Humanities (Prospective Course Description)

Course Description

What does it mean to be human? In this course, we shall survey answers to this question provided in the history of Western thought, from the Ancient World to Modernity. This interdisciplinary course will include religious, philosophical, literary, psychological, and sociological texts.

Schedule of Readings [each "*" corresponds to 1-3 class sessions]

Introduction

Why Care About the Humanities?

* David Foster Wallace, "This is Water"

* Martha Nussbaum, "Not For Profit: Liberal Education and Democratic Citizenship"

Unit 1: The Ancient World

Religion: Origin Stories

* The Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) King James Version: *Genesis*

Storytelling: Honor, Fate, and What It Means to Be Human

* Homer, Selections from the *Iliad*

Theater: Tragedy, Fate, and Responsibility

* Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*

Philosophy: What Ought I To Do?

* Plato, *Euthyphro*

* Plato, *Apology*; "Allegory of the Cave"

* Aristotle, Selections from the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Unit 2: The Medieval World

Religion: Evil

* "The Rebellion of Iblis" in the *Quran* (7.1-54); Anselm, "On the Fall of the Devil"

Religion: Christianity, Guilt

* From Gospel According to Saint Matthew: The Sermon on the Mount

* Augustine, Selections from the *Confessions*

Unit 3: The Renaissance

Poetry: Sin and Salvation

* Dante, Selections from the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*

The Novel: Romance, Chivalry, and Anarchy

* Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

Unit 4: Modernity

Philosophy: Reason, Science, and Innate Ideas(?)

* Descartes, Selections from *Discourse on Method*

* Locke, Selections from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Politics, Religion, and Philosophy: The Enlightenment

- * Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration"
- * Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"

Philosophy and Literature: Romanticism

- * Rousseau, Selections from *Discourse on Inequality*
- * Goethe, Selections from *Faust*

Economics and Psychology: Alienation and Disassociation

- * Marx, Selection from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*
- * Freud, Selection from *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Philosophy and Literature: Existentialism

- * Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism"
- * Sartre, "No Exit"

Society: Oppression and Discrimination

- * W.E.B. DuBois, Selection from *The Souls of Black Folk*
- * Richard Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground"
- * Mary Wollstonecraft, Selection from *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- * de Beauvoir, Selections from *The Second Sex*