Introduction to the Humanities

HUMA-1302-51002

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Course Meets: TR 0800-0920, A843.

Office Hours: I am available for consultation in A339 most afternoons after 2pm.

What Are We Trying to Accomplish

What does it all mean? What, specifically, does it mean to be human? Towards what end or purpose, if any, are our lives ordered? And by what means, individual and collective, personal and social, can we realize that end?

Historically human beings have answered these questions in many different ways, using diverse disciplines and bringing into being diverse spiritual and civilizational traditions or ways of being human. In the beginning we drew on inherited myths, developed and passed on in the context of communal rituals and these continue to be important ways of engaging questions of meaning and value. But eventually, for reasons we will discover, the question of meaning became problematic. People began to create competing images and to recount, enact, and live out competing stories. Myth became literature and ritual drama (and eventually interactive games). Art and music, similarly, became means of advancing competing visions. Struggling to evaluate competing claims regarding what it means to be human, people began to form concepts and make arguments and then to go back and explain and justify the meaning of their old myths in conceptual terms, giving birth to philosophy and theology. Ultimately, as we began to understand better how the world works many of us came to believe that we could transform it to such an extent that not just the means but also the meaning of human life was the product of individual and or collective human action. Science and technology or the social sciences and politics rather than cult or culture became the archetectonic (organizing) disciplines for human civilization.

This term we will look at the question of what it means to be human, drawing on many different disciplines, both creating and interpreting works of art and making and evaluating arguments. You will be challenged to understand the question of meaning from perspectives different from your own and to allow your inherited principles and values to be challenged by both story and argument. You will also be challenged to take the first steps towards deciding for yourself what it means to be human, and to share this answer in image and story or concept and argument. Finally, you will have an opportunity to analyze how the way in which we answer these questions is rooted in our material conditions and shaped by social structure and to begin to learn how to act effectively on your principles and values in the public arena.

CURRENT CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is a Texas Common Course Number. This is a DCCCD Core Curriculum Course.
**Prerequisite:** One of the following must be met: (1) DREA 0093 or (2) English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or (3) have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Reading standard.

**Course Description**  This stand-alone course is an interdisciplinary survey of cultures focusing on the philosophical and aesthetic factors in human values with an emphasis on the historical development of the individual and society and the need to create

Coordinating Board Academic Approval Number 24.0103.51 12

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**
Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning.

**CORE OBJECTIVES**
Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will prepare for contemporary challenges by developing and demonstrating the following core objectives:
(A) Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry and analysis, and the evaluation and synthesis of information;
(B) Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication;
(C) Empirical and Quantitative Skills: to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions;
(D) Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**
Students completing all sections of this course will be able to:

❖ Demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
❖ Articulate how these works express the values of the individual and society within an historical and social context.
❖ Articulate an informed personal response and critically analyze works in the arts and humanities.
❖ Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the influence of literature, philosophy, and the arts on cultural experiences.
❖ Demonstrate an awareness of the creative process and why humans create.

Students completing this particular section will, in addition be able to:

❖ Explain and show a rudimentary ability to practice the disciplines humanity has used to engage questions of meaning and value,
❖ Analyze and interpret texts and other cultural artifacts, making basic use of historical-critical and other methods where appropriate,
Analyze the complex interaction between ways of being human and the material basis on which and the social structures in the context of which they emerge,

Take and defend an independent position regarding the question of what it means to be human, using one or more of the disciplines studied this semester.

Participate in the creative process in a way which makes a statement of some kind about what it means to be human.

Learn to act effectively in the public arena on behalf of their chosen way.

How We Will Accomplish This

Experiential Bases: Each week will be devoted to a particular discipline or cluster of disciplines You will be pointed to a course content folder which contains introductory material for you to read and engage, including at least some of the following.

- Introductory videos
- Artifacts from the tradition, including
  - Images
  - Music from the tradition
  - Videos
  - Key texts, imaginative, interpretive, and theoretical

You will need to engage these materials with sufficient care to participate actively in class discussions and to complete written assignments. All course materials will be available online. **Students do not need to purchase anything.**

Please note that readings in (parentheses) are recommended and directed at honors students, not required, though all are encouraged to read them.

Dialogue, Debate, and Deliberation: When we meet together we will have an opportunity to:

- share historical and other background information which will help set the texts and artifacts we analyze and the questions we ask in their proper context,
- analyze and interpret texts and other artifacts together, so that you can begin to learn the relevant techniques,
- learn to practice civil dialogue, debate, and deliberation regarding questions of meaning and value and their practical implications, and
- learn to act effectively on behalf of our principles and values in the public arena.

Attendance at and active participation in class discussions are critical to success in this course. Students’ level of preparation for class sessions, the quantity and quality of their participation in class discussions, and their diligence in submitting work in a sufficiently timely fashion to permit meaningful dialogue with the instructor and in making recommended revisions to their papers will count for 20% of the their grades. Because class discussion and close interaction with the instructor
is critical to the learning process, repeated absence may result in a lower grade.

Written Work: Students will prepare a short paper for each of the major sections of this course. These papers will ask them to

- Take and defend a position on the question of linguistic relativity
- Analyze and interpret a work of fine art OR create a work of art (drawing, painting, sculpture, musical composition, story, poem, drama, film, or game) which communicates something about their understanding of what it means to be human, together with a brief artist’s statement explaining their vision, how they have chosen to communicate it,
- Engage in original historical and/or social analysis, and
- Take and defend a position regarding a fundamental question of meaning and value
- Analyze the results of an individual relational meeting.

Civic Engagement Project: Students will conduct at least one individual relational meeting or participate in a significant way in planning and carrying out a simple direct action which in some way advances their vision of what it means to be human in the public arena.

Honors Contracts: Students wishing to receive honors credit for this course must complete the majority of the recommended readings, post on them weekly, and prepare a more extensive major paper, creative project, or civic engagement project. Please consult the instructor for details.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic Relativity</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis and Interpretation of Fine Art or Creative Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical/Social Analysis</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Does it Mean to Be Human?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Meeting Analysis</td>
<td>15%</td>
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GRADING SYSTEM:

Work will be evaluated based on the extent to which it demonstrates:

- Understanding of and engagement with the questions we are exploring,
- The ability to approach these questions through the disciplines we introduce, considering formal
objects and not just subject matters,
❖ Mastery of the ongoing transhistorical debate around what it means to be human,
❖ The ability to make and evaluate arguments, create images and stories, or to conduct individual relational meetings,
❖ Mastering of the relevant technical skills (grammar, rhetoric, and logic; drawing, painting, sculpture, musical composition, etc.)

All assignments will be graded on a 10 point scale:

❖ A grade of 10 indicates outstanding work involving highly original insights sustained by a mastery of questions, disciplines, ways, and technical skills not ordinarily found among students at this level. Only rarely awarded.
❖ A grade of 9 indicates a mastery of questions, disciplines, ways, and technical skills which allows the student to reach preliminary autonomous judgments.
❖ A grade of 8 indicates an incipient mastery of questions, disciplines, ways, and technical skills which indicates significant progress towards autonomous judgement.
❖ A grade of 7 indicates significant familiarity with the questions we have explored and knowledge of factual material regarding the various ways but not the ability to approach those questions by means of the formal disciplines we have studied, and technical ability sufficient to convey meaning, but with significant, distracting errors.
❖ A grade of 6 indicates only very limited familiarity with the subject matter but not of the questions or ways OR very serious technical (grammatical, rhetorical, or logical; drawing, painting, musical) errors which mean that basic familiarity with the subject matter is not being communicated.
❖ Grades less than 6 indicate no real familiarity with the subject matter or such serious grammatical, rhetorical, or logical errors that there is global failure to communicate.

A: > 9.0       B: > 8.0      C: > 7.0      D: > 6.0      F: < 6.0

Academic Integrity: All sources consulted must be listed in the bibliography of the papers for which they were consulted. When you use an idea developed by someone else be sure to give the author of the idea proper credit. Direct quotations must be indicated clearly. Students are free to work together on all out of class assignments but must do their own writing, expressing their own ideas in their own words. Please do not fail to meet these requirements, as failure to do so may imply dishonest intent and a lack of a willingness to learn and may result in penalties in accord with college regulations.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Institutional Policies relating to this course can be accessed from the following link: www.elcentrocollege.edu/syllabipolicies
The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at any time. Ample notice will be given to students of any changes and accommodation made for any changes which affect work already done.
Course Outline

Note: All required readings are short selections from the works indicated. Readings listed in (parentheses) are recommended.

Introduction

FIRST WEEK
Questions, Disciplines, and Ways

Analysis and Interpretation
Artifacts Exercise

Disciplines: What Are the Liberal Arts? The Humanities?

Ways of Being Human

SECOND WEEK
Language
(Araki, Naoki. “Saussure and Chomsky”)
(Comrie, Bernard. “Language and Thought”)
(Boroditsky, Lera. “How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?)

The Social Organization of Space and Time: Maps, Calendars, and Timelines
Various Maps, Calendars, and Timelines
(Crabtree, Andrew. Remarks on the Social Organization of Space and Place)
(Pare, Christopher. Archeological Periodization and its Purpose)

Videos and Interactive Exercises

Interpreting Imaginative Works

THIRD WEEK
Visual Arts
Images from Primal, Sacral Monarchic, Axial, Silk Road, and Secular Societies

FOURTH WEEK
The Built Environment
Images of the Built Environment
Khan, Smita. Our Built Environment
FIFTH WEEK
Music
Analysis of Music Across Civilizations, culminating in Sonata Allegro form, Atonality
(Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style)

SIXTH WEEK
Myth/Epic/Drama
Keres Myth of Origin, selections
The Iliad, selections
Sophocles. Antigone (video)
Alighieri, Dante. Commedia, selections

SEVENTH WEEK
Poetry and the Short Story
Tezcatlipoca’s Song
Eliot, TS. Four Quartets, selections
de la Cruz, Juan, Noche Oscura
Morales Avila’s, Ricardo. Nosotros
Troncoso, Sergio. The Day of the Dead

Analyzing and Interpreting Human Social Reality

EIGHTH WEEK
Archeology
Images of Artifacts Central to the Primary Matriarchy Debate
(Kvilhaug, Maria. Defense of Marija Gimbutas’ Thesis about “Old Europe”)

Historical Critical Method
Genesis 1, 2; Judges 5, 1 Samuel 8, 9, Leviticus 25, Exodus 3

NINTH WEEK
Social Theory
Marx, Karl. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, Communist Manifesto, (Paris Manuscripts), selections
(Weber, Max. Economy and Society, selections)
(Durkheim, Emile. Elementary Forms of Religious Life, selections)

TENTH WEEK
Psychological Theory
Fromm, Erich. Escape from Freedom, selections
(Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and its Discontents, selections)
(Jung, C.G. Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, selections)
Seeking Wisdom

ELEVENTH WEEKS
The Way of Wisdom
Plato. *Republic*, selection
Prajnaparamitahdraya Sutra
Bhagavadgita, selections

The Way of Harmony
Da Xue, selections
Tao Te Ching, selections

TWELFTH WEEK
The Way of Justice and Liberation and the Ways of Civilizational Progress
Exodus 3, Leviticus 25, Romans 3 James 2
(Sandberg, Anders. *Thoughts on the Omega Point Theory*)
(Marx, Karl. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, selections)

Building and Exercising Power in Service to the Common Good

THIRTEENTH WEEK
Class/Mana/Power
Individual Relational Meetings
Practical Exercises

FOURTEENTH WEEK
Strategy/Operations
Practical Exercises

FIFTEENTH WEEK
Tactics
Practical Exercises

Bringing it All Together

SIXTEENTH WEEK
Synthesis and Review