

HMST-220-01
Humanistic Studies Sophomore Seminar I: On Being Human
MICA – Fall 2015
Tues. 7-9:45 PM
Bunting 460

Course Syllabus



Korea, U.S. Signal Corps. From 1955 'Family of Man' Project at MoMA. Al Chang.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS:

This course is a seminar developed for sophomores in the Humanistic Studies major.

In this course we will be focusing on what it means to be human in all of its dimensions. The human being will serve as a vector that will allow students to transcend traditional academic disciplinary boundaries, integrating history, philosophy, literature, biology, anthropology, political theory, and contemporary issues, and also as a concrete location that would give academic study powerful, specific resonance and immediate stakes.

Underlying the rationale for this course is the belief that Humanistic Studies should fulfill the social purpose of replacing commodified identities, stereotypes, and impersonal philosophical and systemic abstractions to create empathetic, free-thinking global citizens.

Structurally, the course will operate to emphasize group collaboration and discussion. Almost every class meeting will feature one or more students sharing their work with the others, as well as other sorts of class activities. Students will thereby participate directly in the construction and management of the class, and will hopefully feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the material and for their own learning.

The course will 1) automatically perform the sort of transdisciplinary thinking that our Integrative Humanities program is intended to provide; 2) give students a general overview of some major themes and readings useful to them in their later years in the major as well as throughout their lives, as well as build off of the critical skills acquired in Critical Inquiry; 3) show the various major Humanities disciplines (most notably history, philosophy and literature) in dialogue with one another; and 4) enhance critical reading skills.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to the different disciplines that primarily constitute Humanistic Studies: History, Literature, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Anthropology.
- Develop skills in writing and analysis.
- Read some profound and foundational texts in World History and thought.
- Ponder (and begin to answer!) some important questions about *who we are and why we are here*.
- Enable students to connect large, universal questions of human existence into manageable discussions and projects.
- Assist students' problem-solving and project-development skills as they move a project from an idea, through a research phase, to a final product.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

This course will emphasize **class and small group discussion**. Your participation will be evaluated not only based on the quality of your comments in open discussion, but also on alertness, energy, and preparedness. Various organized activities will also provide an opportunity to participate in class ways other than in large- or small-group discussion. **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 20% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities. The amount of readings varies, but at times is quite heavy. It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class**, either printed out or on your computer screen (see below for comments on bringing laptops to class), to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

There are **2 conventional paper** assignments during the semester. The first is a **short** (2-3 pp. double-spaced) **paper** discussing Hesiod and Genesis due in **Week 3** worth **15% of your final grade**. The second is a **short** (1-2 pp.) **informal commentary** on the MacArthur Genius Grant winners, due in **week 6** worth **5% of your final grade**.

In **Week 8** you will be teamed with one or two partners for a **conversation exercise**. Each partner will be assigned different readings from a different disciplinary perspective on the same topic, and will be expected to **engage in a conversation** about the topic, and to **report in writing** (according to parameters provided separately) on the process. This exercise is intended to replicate the sort of dialogue between the Humanities disciplines that makes this course of study so appealing. This conversation exercise will be **worth 15% of your final course grade**.

In **week 9** students will write a **short** (1-2 pp.) **biography of a body part**. Discuss how it relates to the other aspects of your body and your sense of self, and describe what it might symbolize for your greater being, and what it projects to others. This assignment is worth **10% of your grade**.

In **week 11** students will be expected to provide a **commentary on any chapter of the Tao Te Ching** of their choosing, and in whatever form they wish (essay, poem, visual piece, etc.), although non-written or non-prose

commentaries must be accompanied by a paragraph or two of prose explanation. Students should expect to read/present their work in class. This commentary exercise is worth **15% of your final grade**.

There will also be a **final paper** (-10 pp.) in this class which will involve original research and ideas. This paper is the "Keywords" paper, the details of which will be provided in a later handout. This final assignment is worth **20 % of your overall grade**.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Computer submissions of paper assignments are not allowed. The first (short) paper will be marked down a grade for each day late (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) Once chosen, the date of your presentation cannot be changed. The final paper will not be accepted late - **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

ATTENDANCE POLICY

There are only 15 meetings in the semester and so we have to make the most of them. Any unexcused absence beyond 1 will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). 2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.

ADA Compliance Statement

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Learning Resource Center at [410-225-2416](tel:410-225-2416), in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.mica.edu/LRC>.

Health and Safety Compliance

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to follow health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify and require appropriate personal protective equipment for each art making process, for each student, in all of their classes, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate for their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection are in place.

Title IX Accommodation

Maryland Institute College of Art seeks to provide an environment based on mutual respect that is free of bias, discrimination and harassment. If you have encountered sexual harassment/misconduct/assault we encourage you to report this. Disclosures made to faculty must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator, Title IX Deputy Coordinator, or Title IX Specialist. Disclosures made by students in course assignments are not exempt from mandatory reporting. If you require academic accommodations due to an incident involving sexual harassment or discrimination, please contact Student Affairs at 410.225.2422 or Human Resources at 410.225.2363.

Students with Extended Illness or Cause for Legitimate Absence

In the case of extended illness or other legitimate absences that may keep the student from attending a class for more than three meetings, students must contact the Student Development Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs so that instructors can be notified. Graduate students must contact the instructor, program director, and the Office of Graduate Studies. Students in art education or professional studies programs must contact the Dean for the Center for Art Education or the Dean of the School for Professional and Continuing Studies, respectively. The appropriate administrator will facilitate a conversation with faculty to determine whether the student can achieve satisfactory academic progress.

CLASSROOM LAPTOP & CELLPHONE POLICY

Because students in previous classes have abused the privilege of having laptops in class, I have set limits on their use. An open laptop is not permitted in class, unless you receive special permission from me to take notes on it or for some other purpose.

Cellphones must be stowed away and turned off for the duration of the class.

READINGS

*Hesiod, *Theogony & Works & Days**

*Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching, with selected commentaries from the past 2000 years*, trans. Red Pine.*

Copper Canyon Press, 2009. You must purchase THIS EDITION for this class.

All other course readings will be available online or accessible on Moodle. This is done partly to give you a wide array of readings, and also to save you money. HOWEVER: you MUST bring all readings with you to class every meeting. Failure to do so will result in an 'F' for the day.

COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS- Subject to change if necessary.

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

Week 1 – 9/1: Introduction to course. Purpose of the Humanities.

PART I: HUMAN ORIGINS

Week 2 – 9/8: Creation Stories

Reading:

- *Creation Stories on Moodle*
- *Bible, Genesis 1-3. Any bible edition is fine. You can find it online at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/KjvGene.html>*

Week 3 – 9/15: Thundering Prophecy from the Shepherd Mystic: Hesiod

Reading:

- *Hesiod, *Theogony & Works and Days* (Editor's Introduction is recommended)*

Writing: *Write a short (2-3 pages, double-spaced) formal paper comparing Eve from Genesis and Prometheus from Hesiod. Incorporating discussion of the other Creation stories can also be fruitful, but is not required. The paper should feature abundant citations from the texts in question.*

Week 4 – 9/22: Other Perspectives on Human Origins

Reading:

- Charles Darwin, excerpts from *The Descent of Man* (1871):
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1871darwin.asp>
- Stephen Mithen, excerpts from *The Prehistory of the Mind* (1996) on Moodle
- David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* (excerpt - taken from April 2008 issue of *Harper's*, on Moodle).
- Peruse documents related to the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial. Read the wiki site for background, and read HL Mencken's articles on it, and then browse the others:
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scopes_trial
 - <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/mencko4.htm>
 - Transcripts of opposing lawyers' statements (including that of William Jennings Bryan):
<http://www.csudh.edu/oliver/smt310-handouts/wjb-last/wjb-last.htm>
 - Cross-examination transcript from the trial
<http://personal.uncc.edu/jmarks/Darrow.html>
 - Popular songs from the 1920's about the trial:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/sfeature/sf_music.html#
- Creationism and the Creation Museum
 - ... go to Creation Museum site: www.creationmuseum.org and browse several of the following:
 - Pictures of museum: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/scalzi/sets/72157603091357751/>
 - Reviews of museum: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/24/arts/24crea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
 - American Anthropological Association statement on creationism (2000):
<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/evolution.htm>
 - Article on Kansas school board's decision to require creationist teaching:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/09/national/09kansas.html>
 - Creationist pamphlet approved by Parks Service for distribution at Grand Canyon:
<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2004/04/0079987>

PART II: MIND, BODY, NATURE: WHERE IS THE SELF?

Week 5 – 9/29: Preliminary Discussions on the Self & Identity

Reading:

- Contemporary philosophy I: *The Self and the Soul*: John Perry/Gretchen Weirob, "First Night" (approx. 10 pp.)
- Contemporary philosophy II: *The Self and the Brain*: Meredith Michaels, "Persons, Brains, and Bodies" (approx. 2 pp.)
- Contemporary philosophy III: *The Self and Society*: Erving Goffman, "The Performance of Self in Everyday Life" (approx. 15 pp.)
- *Social Theory and the Self*: Patricia and Peter Adler, "The Glorified Self" from *Social Theory, Continuity and Confrontation: A Reader*, pp. 194-207.

Week 6 – 10/6: MacArthur Genius Grants!

Note of explanation: In late September, the MacArthur Foundation will announce the winners of its annual Fellowships, often referred to as 'Genius Grants' by the media. These huge grants - \$500,000 no-strings-attached - are given to men and women of all fields and emerge from a mysterious evaluation process. The awards usually garner significant media attention.

Reading:

- Go to the MacArthur Foundation Fellows website at:

www.macfound.org/fellows

and look at its write-up of 2015 Fellows, its FAQ, and any other info that seems interesting to you.

- Kenneth Hope, "Giving it Away at the MacArthur Fellows Program" (approx. 20 pp.)
- Jim Collins, "It Isn't Easy Being a Genius" from *New York Times* 9/19/2005.
- Also, look for newspaper reports on the 2015 winners for more info.
- Christine Battersby, excerpts from *Gender and Genius* (approx. 30 pp.)

Writing:

- Write an informal, 1-2 pp. commentary on the 2015 winners, identifying a favorite and explaining your choice.
- Please fill out the short Value Statements Survey and bring to class.

Week 7 – 10/13: Discussions of Value Survey Results, and of the Self & Identity, cont.

Reading:

- *Memory and Self*: Joan Didion, "On Keeping a Notebook" from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, pp. 131-141.
- W.E.B. Dubois, excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* (approx. 10 pp.)
- Sally Munt, "The Personal, Experience, and the Self" from *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 186-197.
- Jarvis Jay Masters, "Scars" from *The Body Reader*, pp. 329-332.

***** FALL BREAK 10/20 *****

Week 8 – 10/27: Conversation Exercise: Bodies

Reading (each conversation partner must read 2 of the following PAIR GOLDHILL AND OATES; BAKHTIN AND IRIGARY):

- Simon Goldhill, excerpts from "Who do you think you are?" from *Love, Sex & Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives*.
- Mikhail Bakhtin, excerpts on the grotesque body from *Rabelais and his World*.
- Luce Irigaray, "The Sex Which is Not One."
- Joyce Carol Oates, "Landfill."

Writing:

- For this class you and a partner will have to perform your CONVERSATION ASSIGNMENT. More details will follow.

Week 9 – 11/3: Posthumanism, Cyberconsciousness, Artificial Intelligence

Reading:

- TBA (Excerpts from Martine Rothblatt; Ray Kurzweil, etc.)

Writing:

- Write a brief (1-2 pp.) **biography of a body part**. Discuss how it relates to the other aspects of your body and your sense of self, and describe what it might symbolize for your greater being, and what it projects to others. **10% of your grade**.
- Compile questions for our guest speaker.

Week 10 – 11/10: Tao Te Ching, part 1

Reading:

- Lao Tze, *Tao Te Ching*, Editor's preface & introduction, Chs. 1-37 (pp. ix-xxiv; 1-75); it might also be useful to familiarize yourself with the short biographies of the commentators in the Glossary, pp. 165-181.

Week 11 – 11/17: *Tao Te Ching*, part 2

Reading:

- Lao Tze, *Tao Te Ching*, Chs. 38-81 (pp. 76-163).

Writing:

- Please write/create a commentary on a chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* chosen by you. This can take the form of a philosophical commentary or essay, a fictional or poetic response, or a visual, musical, or performance piece. Commentaries that are not written or in prose must be accompanied by a paragraph or two of explanation. Be sure to include a copy of the chapter in question with your commentary. Students should expect to read/present their work in class.

PART III: WORK AND LIFE'S PURPOSE

Week 12 – 11/24:

Reading:

- Marguerite Duras, *Malady of Death*, on Moodle (approx. 65 pp.)
- David Graeber, "Army of Altruists: On the Alienated Right to do Good" from *Harper's Magazine* (Jan. 2007).
- Albert Camus, "Myth of Sisyphus," Ch. 4, found at the following website:
<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/keefe/hell/camus.html>

Week 13 – 12/1: *Work, Labor, and Happiness*

Reading:

- Alain de Botton, "Career Counseling" and "Aviation" from *Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (approx. 60 pp., much of it pictures).
- Karl Marx, excerpts on "Estranged Labor" from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (approx. 12 pp.)
- Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"

Week 14 – 12/8: *Global Labor Conditions*

Class Activity:

- MOVIE: "Workingman's Death (2005)." Directed by Michael Glawogger.

Reading: NONE.

Week 15 – 12/15: Last class!

Final Paper due in class today!