

Jackson College
Humanities 131: Cultural Connections

“You don’t have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.”
(Ray Bradbury)

“The first step—especially for young people with energy and drive and talent, but not money—the first step to controlling your world is to control your culture. To model and demonstrate the kind of world you demand to live in. To write the books. Make the music. Shoot the films. Paint the art.”
(Chuck Palahniuk)

Instructor	Thomas W. Howard
Location	Programs Building, Cooper Street Correctional Facility
Day & Time	Tuesdays 12:50 - 3:50 PM
Course Text	<i>Handbook for the Humanities</i> by Janetta Rebold Benton and Robert DiYanni
Course Materials	1. pens 2. notepad for notes and writing 3. two-pocket folder

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course examines contemporary issues, their human and technological components, and their historical precedents through art, music, literature, and philosophy. During this semester, we will focus on and learn how to “read” the creative expressions that stem from human beings living in the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries as they describe the world in which they—and we—live.

Why Study Culture?

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch tells his daughter, “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” The idea is that we are so involved with our own history, beliefs, and traditions that we forget that other people come from their own personal experiences. Culture is the result of a collective experience, often extending over centuries, and it is important to recognize how our collective experience has shaped us so that we can see how other cultures’ experience shaped them.

In this class, we do the first step of this enterprise, which is in discovering our own biases and how they were formed. We focus on Western civilization with the hopes that we can recognize *how* we developed the artistic and philosophical viewpoints that we have. For example, why do we believe in abstract ideas like individuality, self-evident rights, and democracy? How has art contributed to (and been affected by) these changes in culture? Ultimately, we will discover the way Western civilization has tried to answer who we are and how we do (or should) see the world.

General Education Outcomes

GEO 6:

Understand Aesthetic Experience and Artistic Creativity

Outcome	The Student:
Meaning / Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses visual, musical, or literary vocabulary to identify works of art and organizes by basic historic and cultural influences
Analysis and Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies methods of analysis and interpretation of works of art uses genre-specific language to support critical reflection
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when prompted, engages in discussions of the creative, cultural, and historical contexts within which an artist works
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies the aesthetic standards used to make critical judgments in various artistic fields
Appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approaches a work of creative expression with a combination of resistance and openness, disinterest and interest expressed in formal discussion or writing

GEO 7:

Understand and Respect the Diversity and Interdependence of the World's People and Cultures

Outcome	The Student:
Knowledge of and regard for groups with which one identifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies characteristics, values, and hallmarks of the groups to which one belongs
Knowledge of and regard for individuals from groups other than one's own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies characteristics, values, and hallmarks of groups other than one's own articulates benefits of interacting with individuals from groups other than one's own
Knowledge of the importance of diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defines various institutional systems and personal barriers that inhibit diversity such as racism, sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, privilege, etc. classifies behaviors and structures that promote diversity and encourage global thinking recognizes the ways in which, historically, cultures have mutually informed and enriched each other
Cultural Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes vocabulary, behaviors, and practices that are culturally appropriate

Major Assignments

- Reading Quizzes:** There will be timed, weekly, open-book quizzes consisting of multiple choice and essay questions. These are to ensure that you have read the assigned chapter before we discuss it.
- Journals:** Each week, you will write 1-2 pages (at least one *full* page) in your notebook reflecting on the material from that week. I will always provide a general prompt for the week's journal, and it will often be based around supplemental reading assignments.
- Examinations:** Due to the shortened schedule of the course, there will only be one examination in this course. Your final examination will be based on the chapters from the textbook, the supplemental readings, and notes given in class. The examination will consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, true and false, short answer, and essay questions.
- Exploratory Essay:** You will write a 3-5 page exploratory essay exploring deeper into a topic from class, specifically looking at one text or work from an author, artist, etc. See the rubric below (p. 5).
- Participation:** Much like in English literature classes, a majority of the "work" done in class is via discussion. This is a time when we can all reflect on the assigned reading and explore different ideas. I expect *everyone* to contribute (your ideas are always valuable, even if you don't think so). This includes any group work or independent in-class assignments that occur during the semester—just contribute in class and you will do well on this grade.

Grading Procedure

Reading Quizzes	10 @ 20 points	200 points	20%
Journals	10 @ 20 points	200 points	20%
Examinations		200 points	20%
Exploratory Essay		200 points	20%
Participation & Miscellaneous		200 points	20%
	Total:	1000 points	100%

Grading Scale

4.0 = 90-100%
3.5 = 85-89%
3.0 = 80-84%
2.5 = 75-79%
2.0 = 70-74%
1.5 = 65-69%
1.0 = 60-64%
0.5 = 55-59%
0.0 = 0-54%

NOTE: a final grade of 2.0 or higher is considered passing

Missed/Late Assignments

In general, you cannot submit late assignments because the course does not allow for it. Extenuating circumstances notwithstanding, you cannot make up any quizzes or examinations that you miss. Similarly, since your research paper will be due the last week of class, it is impossible to submit it late.

The Incomplete Grade

In accordance with JC policy, an Incomplete or “I” grade is only issued to students who have demonstrated good standing in the class and hold a passing grade at the time of an extenuating circumstance that precludes completion of the class. Documentation validating the circumstance may be required.

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic Honesty is defined as ethical behavior that includes student production of their own work and not representing others’ work as their own, by cheating or by helping others to do so.

Plagiarism is defined as the failure to give credit for the use of material from outside sources. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- submitting others’ work as your own
- using data, illustrations, pictures, quotations, or paraphrases from other sources without adequate documentation
- reusing significant, identical or nearly identical portions of ones own prior work without acknowledging that one is doing so or without citing this original work (self-plagiarism)

Cheating is defined as obtaining answers/material from an outside source without authorization.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- plagiarizing in any form
- using notes/books/electronic material without authorization
- copying
- submitting others’ work as your own or submitting your work for others
- altering graded work
- falsifying data
- exhibiting other behaviors generally considered unethical
- allowing your work to be submitted by others

Any violation of the above will likely earn you a zero on the assignment, but it may include an “F” in the course and referral to the Office of the Academic Dean for further disciplinary action.

Humanities Final Exploratory Essay

DUE Week 12: 15 August 2017

Prompt

Throughout the class, we are given a survey of diverse ideas over a vast period of time—covering up to one thousand years in one week! The purpose of this final essay is for you to land on one particular author or text in order to explore deeper the cultural connections of your chosen source to its own time and ours.

This is *not* a research paper—this is an *investigative* essay where you must rely on the primary source and the material from the class (with some biographical details possible from encyclopedic entries). As a result, **you do not need any sources other than the text that you have chosen**, which you should cite in your paper.

Ultimately, your goal is *discovery*. That is, since you are reading a text that we did not read together, you should find new and interesting things that relate to the class but were not fully covered in the class. For example, perhaps you really enjoyed reading the selections from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, so you want to read his other major work, *Discourses on Livy*, to see how it compares.

After choosing and reading your text, you will write a **3-5 page (handwritten) paper** exploring the work. This is not a “book report” (although *some* summary may be necessary to explain where in the text your discussion is based), but rather you will explain what is interesting about your source and how it connects to the broader subject matter of the time period (e.g., Renaissance) and our own time.

*NOTE: Due to time constraints and the nature of finding external sources in this class, **you should plan to decide on your topic (esp. a particular text) no later than week 9 (25 July 2017)**, although the earlier the better. This will allow you to receive your text on week 10 (1 August 2017), giving you two weeks to write your final paper.*

Grade

- 200 points (20% of final grade)

Key Features of a Commentary

- **an introduction** that immediately engages the reader by clearly announcing the topic under examination (e.g., the author or text), the writer's thesis, and the angle he will take on the topic
- **an explanation of the topic** that reviews what the text is about, who the author was, and any other necessary material to understanding the text
- **an argument for a specific position** that includes reasoning, evidence (from the text), and examples
- **a clarification** that qualifies the argument, avoiding the tendency to overgeneralize or oversimplify the topic
- **a conclusion** that offers an overall assessment of the issue, highlights its importance to readers, and looks to the future

Tentative Calendar:

**NOTE: supplementary reading material will be supplied throughout the course*

Week 1 — 05.23	Introduction to Course / Ancient Civilizations
Week 2 — 05.30	Ancient Greece & Ancient Rome DUE: skim chapter 1 DUE: read chapters 2-3
Week 3 — 06.06	Middle Ages DUE: read chapter 5
Week 4 — 06.13	Early Renaissance DUE: read chapter 6
Week 5 — 06.20	Later Renaissance DUE: read chapter 7
Week 6 — 06.27	Seventeenth Century (Baroque) DUE: read chapter 8
JULY 4 — INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)	
Week 7 — 07.11	Eighteenth Century (Enlightenment) DUE: read chapter 9
Week 8 — 07.18	Earlier Nineteenth Century DUE: read chapter 10
Week 9 — 07.25	Later Nineteenth Century DUE: read chapter 11
Week 10 — 08.01	Earlier Twentieth Century DUE: read chapter 12
Week 11 — 08.08	Later Twentieth Century DUE: read chapter 13
Week 12 — 08.15	FINAL EXAMINATION DUE: Exploratory Essay

The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments to this syllabus as needed.