Hon 272: The Human Event II

Spring 2014

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Office Hours: TTh 10:30-11:30 a.m. 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

This course, like all Human Event courses offered at the Barrett Honors College, is intended to strengthen your ability to reason about some of the most important questions that face humans at all times.

Course Objectives:

1. To improve your ability to reason critically and communicate clearly.
2. To cultivate your ability to engage in intellectual discourse through reading, writing, and discussion.
3. To broaden your historical and cultural awareness and understanding.
4. To deepen your awareness of the diversity of human societies and cultures.
5. To instill you with intellectual breadth and academic discipline in preparation for more advanced study.

We will explore aspects of modern scientific ideas (particularly in physics and biology) and their impact on Western society and culture. In doing so, we will focus on such general questions as:

What do we mean by (scientific or political) revolution?
What features delineate modern science from earlier philosophies in the West?
What are the implications of scientific ideas and applications for humanity at large?

The rise of modern science has fundamentally altered human beings’ conception of the cosmos and their place in it. We begin this course by an examining this revolution in thought ushered in by Nicolas Copernicus and Galileo Galilei, and extended by Isaac Newton. We will also focus on a few fundamental aspects of scientific theories that truly deserve the name “revolutionary”: evolutionary biology, relativity and quantum physics. In particular, we will investigate some of Charles Darwin’s ideas and the impact that these ideas had on man’s understanding of his place in the cosmos. And we will study the startling transition from the accepted “wave theory” of light to Einstein’s “corpuscular” or “quantum” theory of light and its implications for science, technology and philosophy.

The upheaval in thought ushered in by science was not confined to natural philosophers or scientists. We will look, for example, at two “revolutions” in human affairs that, along with the scientific revolution, define the modern world: the political revolution in France at the end of the eighteenth century and the industrial revolution of the West during the nineteenth century.
Class Structure:

**Argumentative Essays (60% of final grade):** You will write three papers for this course. Each essay must be a minimum of 1500 words, but must not exceed 1750 words. A full letter grade will be deducted from papers that fail to remain within the required range of 1500 to 1750 words. Each paper will count for 20% of your final grade. I will announce the due date for each assignment in due course. Here are some general guidelines for how essays are graded in this course:

*A:* An “A” paper is outstanding in every way: in the originality of its thought, in the persuasiveness of its argument, and in the clarity and power of its writing. There are no grammatical and spelling errors. The thesis goes beyond what has been discussed in class and everything in the essay relates to that thesis. Each paragraph has a topic sentence. Experience has shown that, on average, five to ten percent of the papers in any given assignment receive an A grade.

*B:* A “B” paper is approximately what is to be expected of a student in an honors course, particularly by the end of the semester. The prose is generally clear and readable, but there are some grammatical problems and some sentences may be awkward. The essay shows serious thought beyond class discussions, and for the most part is well organized.

*C:* An essay in this range is neither especially bad nor distinctively good. It may have a promising thesis but the argument is unconvincing or confusing. It may show little or no original thought.

*D:* “D” papers have serious weaknesses in content and style. There is no clear thesis and no movement beyond class concepts. The writing style is difficult to read.

**Class Participation (35% of final grade):** You will directly confront and interrogate (excerpts from) the texts of the original thinkers themselves. My task is to help guide you in your work through directed group discussion and to provide relevant background when needed. There is no way that you can learn this material without reading and preparing for each class discussion. My evaluation weighs the quality of your participation more heavily than the mere quantity of your participation. I recognize that some students are shy or quiet, but please note that I reserve the right to call on students during discussion. Your participation grade is your responsibility, however, and you need to speak up to avoid receiving a zero participation grade. In addition, arrival to class late, sleeping during class, failure to bring your text to class (or not actively using it!), or conversing with neighbors will all immediately and without warning result in a zero for participation during a given class, no matter how much you may talk in that class. Failure to bring your text to class will result in an automatic absence for that day.

We are reading texts written over a span of nearly 400 years from post-Renaissance Italy to the 1950’s. It is very likely that you will find at least one author who offends your agnostic, anarchist, atheist, Christian, conservative, feminist, Jewish, liberal, libertarian, Marxist, Muslim, or Wiccan points of view. “I am offended by this text” may be an
interesting statement about your beliefs, but such a statement rarely, if ever, provides a useful analysis of the text at hand. This is a conversation about the text itself, not a place for group therapy or hearing the sound of your own voice. If you start rambling, or making a speech, I will cut you off and call on someone else. If you interrupt while the student who has been recognized is talking, I will mark you zero for the day. Please listen to the person who has been recognized and wait for that person to finish before offering your opinion or comment. Holding a private conversation while the student who has been recognized is talking is a very rude form of interruption, and doing so will earn you a zero participation grade for the day. I know that you will likely have a special point you have thought of and wish to make, but please be considerate of the conversation and don’t simply drag it off on a tangent in the vain hope of scoring extra participation points. If I call on someone, do not answer for them: allow that person to answer. Failure to abide by this rule will earn you a score of zero for that day’s participation.

Here is a guide to what is expected of you in class discussion:

**A:** The student receiving this grade participates extensively in the majority of class discussions. This student arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with written comments and questions on the assigned reading, and, at least occasionally, initiates the discussion, without waiting for the instructor to do so. This student usually has some further comments to add towards the end of a discussion, but does not try to dominate the class. Attempting to dominate the class discussion is a sure way to lose participation points! Instead, this person listens carefully, and responds just as readily to remarks made by fellow class members as to the instructor’s questions.

**B:** The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. This student gives evidence of having done the reading, pays attention to the comments of others, and, at least part of the time, helps the discussion along by raising thoughtful questions.

**C:** This student participates only intermittently during class periods (perhaps only every second or third class). This student is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text, is sometimes unprepared, and often lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class.

**D:** This student seldom contributes to the class discussion. What few contributions this person makes may be useful, but they are infrequent.

**E:** Student never (or only occasionally) speaks.

**Quizzes (5% of final grade):** Keep up with your readings!

**Grading:** 100-99 = A+, 98-93 = A, 92-90 = A-, 89-88 = B+, 87-83 = B, 82-80 = B-, 79-78 = C+, 77-70 = C (C- does not exist at ASU), 69-60 = D, Below 60 = E.

**Reading the Texts:**
The Human Event is a reading-intensive course and you will do more reading of primary sources than in any other course you are likely to take in your early college career. You are expected to come to each class having read the assignment carefully. Many of the works we shall study are philosophical in nature, and thus require close and concentrated reading. Casual skimming will not be helpful to you in discussing these works, and will inhibit you from developing strong paper topics; thus your final grade will suffer. After completing a reading, you should (at a minimum) be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the key question being addressed in the work you have read?
2. What are the main inferences or conclusions of the author?
3. What are the main assumptions made by the writer?
4. What are the implications if we take the author seriously? What if not?

This course involves a demanding reading schedule and you must keep up!

The Barrett Writing Center is available to assist Barrett students with their papers for all their classes. Directed by BHC faculty and staffed by BHC writing tutors who themselves have completed both semesters of The Human Event, the Barrett Writing Center offers individual tutoring on writing papers for the Human Event and your other courses. Its goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so please take advantage of its services. Go to the BWC web site at http://honors.asu.edu/ and click on "Current Students." Under Barrett Writing Center, you then can access tutoring schedules, appointment information, and academic background on the staff.

Policies and Procedures:

Attendance: If you miss more than two classes, your participation grade will be lowered by 1/3 grade for each additional absence. Six absences will automatically result in a maximum possible course grade of C. You must bring the assigned text to class, or you will be marked absent. Arriving late to class more than twice will result in deductions from your class participation grade.

Due Dates and Late Assignments: Papers are due before the time stated in the syllabus. If you have a documented and valid excuse to turn in an assignment after a deadline (serious illness, family emergency, etc.) inform me as soon as possible prior to the due date. Otherwise, submissions made after the due date and time will be marked "zero" and you will not receive credit for the assignment.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of passing off someone else’s words or ideas as your own: it is theft of intellectual property. Whether deliberate or not, such an act will result in failure of the course, as well as referral to the Student Conduct Committee of the University and possible expulsion from the University. The Barrett Honors College utilizes a plagiarism service that checks a database of over 70,000 student essays and text notes. Besides not being worth the risk, plagiarism completely undermines everything...
we are trying to accomplish. Violators will receive no sympathy in this class!

**Student Conduct**: Students must conduct themselves according to the ASU policies posted online at [http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial](http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial). These include the **Student Code of Conduct** and the **Student Academic Integrity Policy**. For information on BHC policies for grievances and grade complaints, go the BHC web page at [http://honors.asu.edu](http://honors.asu.edu) and follow the links for Prospective and Current Students, then Advising and Honors Curriculum, then Academic Advising Office, then Student Academic Grievance Procedures.

**Barrett Multicultural Statement**: Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University, is committed to creating a multicultural learning environment, which is broadly defined as a place where human cultural diversity is valued and respected. Barrett courses integrate multicultural and diversity issues in ways that are designed to enhance students’ honors experience and promote learning goals. We hope that our students will contribute their unique perspectives to this effort by respecting others’ identities and personal life histories and by considering and raising issues related to multiculturalism and diversity as appropriate to individual course content.

**Assorted Policies**: I turn off my cell phone before class; you should do the same. No food or drink is permitted in the classroom!

**Laptop use is not permitted in class.** You must bring printed copies of any online readings to class, and you must bring your books when appropriate. I expect you to keep up with the class discussion and be able to locate the salient text at a moment’s notice. **For those days when the reading is from one of the required books, you must bring the correct book!**

If you fail to bring a copy of the assigned book to class, you will be marked **absent without excuse** for that class period. If you fail to bring a printed copy of an assigned text that has been posted online, you will be marked **absent without excuse** for the class.

I **do not** read or answer emails sent after 5:00 pm on weekdays until the following day. I do not read emails sent to me between 5:00 p.m. on Friday and 9:00 a.m. on the following Monday, until that same Monday.

**Required Texts** *(use only these editions)*:


**In addition, I will provide excerpts from the following:**

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy, Discourses on Method*

Francis Bacon, *New Organon*

Nicolas Copernicus, *On the Revolutions*

Galileo, *The Starry Messenger; Two New Sciences*, and “Letter to the Grand Duchess”

Isaac Newton, selected readings from *The Principia*, and *Optiks*

J.M. Keynes “Newton the Man”

Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics* (on Newton’s notions of absolute space and time)

Franklin, "Report of the Committee Charged by the King to Examine Animal Magnetism"

David Hume, “Of Miracles” from *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Man”

William Blake, “Jerusalem”

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Book 3 (The flying island of Laputa)

Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”

Declaration of the Rights of Man

Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman"

Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution on France*

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Man*

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

Karl Marx, *Wage, Labor and Capital*

William Paley, *Natural Theology*

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*

**Class Schedule**

**Daily Schedule is Subject to Change!**

Class 1  Course Introduction

Class 2  Bacon, *The New Organon*: Idols of the Mind

Class 3  Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*; *Discourse on Method*

Class 4  Copernicus, *On the Revolutions*

Class 5  Galileo, *The Starry Messenger*: pp 45-63; *Two New Sciences*


Class 7  Newton, *A Norton Critical Reader*: "Of Colours" (pages149-55); "Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy" (pages 116-18); "From the General Scholium" on page 118; "From Newton to Cotes" on page 119; and the section titled "Scholium" on pages 231 to (the top half of) page 233.

Class 8  Newton, ibid. : “Laws of Motion”, pages 233-35; “System of the World”, pages 258-63; Keynes, "Newton the Man"


Class 10  Franklin, "Report of the Committee Charged by the King to
Examine Animal Magnetism

Class 11  Hume, Of Miracles


Class 13  Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels (Book 3: Loputa)

Class 14  Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”

Class 15  “Declaration of the Rights of Man”
              Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Woman”

Class 16  Richard Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country;
              Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution on France;
              Mary Woolstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Man;
              Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man

Class 17  Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

Class 18  Shelley, Frankenstein: Preface and Volume I (pp. 3-68)
              Volume II, Chapters I-IV (pp. 69-92)

Class 19  Shelley, Frankenstein: Volume II, Chapters V-IX (pp. 92-123)
              Volume III (pp. 124-91)

Class 20  Smith, “On Wages” from The Wealth of Nations

Class 21  Karl Marx, “Wage, Labor and Capital”

Spring Break.

Spring Break.

Class 22  Paley, Natural Theology

Class 23  Darwin, On the Origin of Species: Chapters II (pp 38-50)
              and III (pp 51-66)

Class 24  Darwin, On the Origin of Species: Chapter IV (pp 67-107),
              Chapter XIV, Recapitulation and Conclusion (pp 371-96)

Class 25  Tennyson, "In Memoriam A.H.H."; Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”;
              Nietzsche, “The Madman”

Class 26  Wells, The Island of Dr. Moreau
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<th>Special Relativity: An Introduction; Lightman, <em>Einstein’s Dreams</em></th>
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<td>Class 28</td>
<td>Quantum Physics: an introduction</td>
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<td>Simone de Beauvoir, <em>The Second Sex</em>; Shulamith Firestone, <em>The Dialectic of Sex</em></td>
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<td>Class 30</td>
<td>Watson, <em>Double Helix</em></td>
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