

HON 171: The Human Event

Sample Syllabus

Dr. Aviva Dove-Viebahn

Course Description:

The Human Event is an intensive, interdisciplinary seminar focusing on key social and intellectual currents in the development of humanity in its diversity. Students examine human thought and imagination from various perspectives, including philosophy, history, literature, religion, science, and art. Coursework emphasizes critical thinking, discussion, and argumentative writing. Exploring texts from earliest recorded history to approximately 1600 C.E., HON 171 is the first half of a two-semester sequence that concludes with HON 272.

This is a reading- and writing-intensive course in which we will discuss a range of texts in a diversity of styles and disciplines throughout the semester, addressing ideas spanning topics such as morality, virtue, faith, war, transformation, gender, love and beauty. These readings will not only fuel in-class discussion but should also serve as models for students' work in this course. The ultimate goal is for students to engage with texts and visual images in a constructive and thoughtful way while interrogating how these texts reflect on the shaping of human knowledge, philosophy and culture over the course of history and across the globe.

Course Objectives:

- ✚ To improve the student's ability to reason critically and communicate clearly.
- ✚ To cultivate the student's ability to engage in intellectual discourse through reading, writing, and discussion.
- ✚ To broaden the student's historical and cultural awareness and understanding.
- ✚ To deepen awareness of the diversity of human societies and cultures.
- ✚ To instill intellectual breadth and academic discipline in preparation for more advanced study.

Required Texts:

The following texts are required and should be purchased at the ASU bookstore or another book retailer of your choice. Please make sure that you purchase the correct translation/edition of each of these texts as indicated below.

- *Gilgamesh*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Free Press)
- *The Essential Odyssey*, Homer, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Hackett)
- *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Barbara Miller (Bantam)
- *Trojan Women*, Euripides, trans. Alan Shapiro (Oxford UP)
- *Republic*, Plato, trans C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett)
- *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century Romance*, trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (Michigan State UP)
- *Inferno*, Dante Alighieri, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Hackett)
- *Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe (Prestwick House)
- Selected readings available as PDFs on Blackboard (marked with "BB" in the schedule below)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Participation (30%):** This course will be discussion-based; therefore, the success of this course for you as a student depends on your engagement, attendance and participation in the classroom. Your insights, as well as those of your classmates, will help generate a collegial atmosphere of collective learning and understanding. I expect each of you to be in class, on time, and with your work

completed (this includes reading required texts **and bringing hard copies of those texts with you to class**, as well as bringing other assignments to class when required). While I will be taking attendance in this class, your attendance alone is not enough to guarantee you a good participation grade. Active participation in discussions and sincere attention to in-class exercises are crucial and I will be grading your participation based on your investment in these activities.

Please keep in mind that participation does not just mean talking a lot. Although actively participating in discussion is essential, **you will not be able to get an “A” in participation through sheer quantity**. Being a good participant also requires active and attentive listening skills, the ability to consider and address other students’ ideas (whether or not their viewpoints differ from your own), asking thoughtful and productive questions, and making a concerted effort to create a vibrant and participatory community, i.e. addressing comments not just to your professor but also to other students and allowing the time and space for quieter students to speak their mind (please see the participation rubric I will distribute in the first week or two of class for more information). I also strongly recommend that you take notes in the margins of your texts as you’re preparing for class, as well as taking notes during our in-class discussion. Notes are valuable as a reference point for discussion and as a starting point for your essays.

You will be allowed two free absences, after which each absence will cause your participation grade to drop by a full letter grade. If you miss more than five classes, you will receive a zero for your participation grade. Repeated tardiness will also negatively affect your grade. While I appreciate it when students let me know when they will be absent, there are no excused absences in my class (I will handle cases of extreme illness and family emergencies on a case-by-case basis and at my discretion).

2. **Quizzes (10%):** Almost every class, you will take a brief quiz that will gauge your comprehension of and attention to the assigned readings. These quizzes are mainly a way to make sure that you have read the material thoroughly and should not require any additional preparation other than close reading, although I recommend you take notes as you read. At the end of the semester, I will drop the two lowest quiz grades.
3. **Short Assignments (15%):** As a form of preparation for your essay writing, you will be asked to complete three short writing assignments over the course of the semester, each of which will be worth 5% of your grade. These will include one graded introductory paragraph and two textual analyses. Further instructions and rubrics for these assignments will be provided in class.
4. **Essays (45%):** You will be asked to write three argumentative essays in this class. Together, your first and second essay will comprise 25% of your grade, with second essay functioning as a revision and expansion of the first. While the first essay will be graded, if all criteria for these essays are fulfilled, the grade for your second essay will replace all but 5% of the grade for your first (i.e. your first essay is worth 5% and its revision/expansion worth 20%). Your third essay assignment will be worth 25% of your grade. These assignments will all require close reading, analytical thinking and persuasive writing skills. Other guidelines are included below and specific prompts will be provided in class and on Blackboard well in advance of each assignment deadline. Essays 1 and 3 will also include a draft, which will be critiqued by your peers (if your draft is late, your paper will be docked a full letter grade).

COURSE CALENDAR

Part I: Gods, Heroes and Origin Myths

Week 1

Introduction to syllabus and course content

✚ In-class writing exercise

Read: *Gilgamesh* (c. 13th-7th century BCE), p. 69-150

Week 2

Read: *Gilgamesh*, p. 151-199

✚ **Textual Analysis Assignment due**

Read: Homer's *The Odyssey* [c. 8th century BCE], Books 1, 5, and 9

Week 3

Read: Homer's *The Odyssey*, Books 10, 11 and 12

✚ **Introduction paragraph due**

Week 4

Read: Homer's *The Odyssey*, Books 16, 19, and 23

✚ **Essay #1 draft due:** bring a hard copy of your essay draft to class for Peer Review (post your draft to Blackboard by 11:59pm)

Week 5

Read: Selections from Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* (c. 6th century BCE) (BB)

Read: Selections from Confucius' *Analects* (c. 5th-3rd century BCE) and selections from *The Book of Chung Tzu* (c. 3rd century BCE) (BB)

✚ **Essay #1 due** (turn in hardcopy to Dr. Dove's office, Sage South 162, and submit electronic copy by 4pm)

Part II: Conflict and Culture

Week 6

Read: *The Bhagavad Gita* (c. 2nd century BCE), p. 23-83

Read: *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 85-146

Week 7

Read: Selections from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (c. 5th century BCE) (BB)

Read: Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE)

Week 8

Read: Plato's *Republic* (c. 380 BCE): books 1&2, p.1-65 (full chapters)

Week 9

Read: *Republic*, book 3, p. 66-73 (beg.-392c9), 99-102 (414b8-end) **and**
book 4, p. 103-135 (full chapter)

Read: *Republic*: book 6, p. 197-207 (502c8-end) **and**
book 7, p. 208-214 (beg.-520d5) **and**
book 10, p. 313-326 (608d2-end)

 **Textual Analysis Assignment due** (turn in hardcopy in class, submit to Blackboard by 11:59pm)

Part III: Identity, Love and Morality

Week 10

Read: Selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) (BB)

Read: Selections from Farid ud-Din Attar's *Conference of the Birds* (1177 CE) (BB)

Essay #2 due

Week 11

Read: *Silence*, p. 3-141 (c. 13th century CE) (*English pages only*)

Read: *Silence*, p. 141-315

Week 12

Read: Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (1308 CE) through Canto XIX (19) (p. 3-185, *English pages only*)

Read: *Inferno*, Canto XX (20)-end (p. 187-315, *English pages only*)

Week 13

Read: Selections from Bartolome de las Casas' *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542 CE) (BB)

Watch: *The New World* (dir. Terrence Malick, 2006, 135 minutes) (BB)

Week 14

Read: Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1592 CE)

Week 15

 **Essay #3 draft due:** bring a hard copy of your essay draft to class for Peer Review (post your draft to Blackboard by 11:59pm)