

HON 272: The Human Event

A 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 approximately 1600 to the present, HON 272 is the second half of a two-semester sequence that starts with HON 171. These readings will not only fuel in-class discussion but should also serve as models for students' work in this course, which will be comprised of reading responses and formal essays. The ultimate goal is for students to engage with texts 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.

- *Candide*, Voltaire (Norton)
- *Observations of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, Immanuel Kant (U California Press)
- *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill (Pearson)
- *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud (Norton)
- *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Tom Stoppard (Grove)
- *The Medium is the Massage*, Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore (Gingko)
- Selected readings available as PDFs on Blackboard (marked with "BB" in the schedule below)

COURSE CALENDAR

Part I

“...things cannot be otherwise than they are, for since everything is made to serve an end, everything necessarily serves the best end... Consequently, those who say everything is well are uttering mere stupidities; they should say everything is for the best.”

Week 1

Introduction to syllabus and course content

Read: Excerpt from *Émile, or On Education*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1762] (BB)

Week 2

Read: *Candide*, Voltaire [1759], p. 1-75 (complete text)

Week 3

Read: *Observations of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, Immanuel Kant [1764]

Read: Excerpt from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft [1792] (BB)

Week 4

Read: “Alienated Labor,” Karl Marx [1844] (BB)

Watch (outside class): *Metropolis*, dir. Fritz Lang [1927]

Part II

“Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility.”

Week 5

Read: *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill [1869], p. 61-110

Read: *On Liberty*, p. 111-167

Week 6

Read: *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud [1930], p. 23-88

Read: *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 89-149

Week 7

Read: “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman [1899] (BB)

Read: Excerpt from *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois [1903] and “For My People,” Margaret Walker [1942] (BB)

Week 8

Read: Excerpt from *Black Skin, White Masks*, Franz Fanon [1952] (BB)

Read: "Sonny's Blues," James Baldwin [1957] (BB)

Week 9

Spring Break

Week 10

Watch (outside class): *Casablanca*, dir. Michael Curtiz [1943]

Read: Excerpt from *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi [1986] AND two poems (Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner [1945] and Anthony Hecht's "More Light! More Light!" [1967]) (BB)

Part III

"Life in a box is better than no life at all, I expect. You'd have a chance at least. You could lie there thinking: Well, at least I'm not dead."

Week 11

Read: "Existentialism is a Humanism," Jean-Paul Sartre [1946]

Read: Selections from *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir [1949]

Week 12

Read: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Tom Stoppard [1966]

Continue discussion of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

Week 13

Read: *The Medium is the Massage* [sic], Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore [1967]

Read: "In Plato's Cave," Susan Sontag [1977]

Continue discussion of *The Medium is the Massage*

Week 14

Watch: *Blade Runner*, dir Ridley Scott [1982]

Read: Excerpt from "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway [1983]

Week 15

Read: "*La conciencia de la mestiza*"/Towards a New Consciousness," Gloria Anzaldúa [1987]

Last day of classes

