HON 272: The Human Event

(Part Deux)

“I don’t know what to do,” Coin said.

- Terry Pratchett, Sourcery

Instructor: Dr. Rob Mack
Day/Time: Section 1
Section 2
Section 3
Section 4
Location: Willow 112
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Office: Sage South 167
Office Hours: Will vary by semester


Course Description & Objectives:
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 C.E. to the present, HON 272 is the second half of a two-semester sequence that begins with HON 171.

Major objectives of the course include the following:
- To broaden your historical and cultural awareness and understanding.
- To deepen your awareness of the diversity of human societies and cultures.
- To improve your ability to reason critically and communicate clearly.
- To cultivate your ability to engage in intellectual discourse through reading, writing, and discussion.
- To instill in you intellectual breadth and academic discipline in preparation for more advanced study.

Given the relatively wide scope of the course, it may help to think about our time together in terms of a single unifying theme. The overarching principle of our exploration this semester will be the notion of *upheaval*. Unit 1—which considers the ideal of a fundamental order that governs the universe, society, and individuals—provides a functionalist foundation contested throughout the remainder of the course. Unit 2 looks at various examples of social rupture (from political revolutions to interpersonal rifts), as well as how mechanisms of suppression and containment have often responded to this rupture. Unit 3, finally, contemplates some auxiliary topics that have historically challenged rational approaches to reality itself, including the *occult, haunting, the unconscious*, and the experiences of *trauma* and *affect*. In this way, the course functions as something of a “boomerang” to my sections of HON 171. While that course traced the historical movement from ineffable experience to sensible order in human affairs, this course ponders a mirrored progression from sensible order to ineffable experience.
All course components will be addressed in greater detail during class, but here is some basic information to give you an idea of what to expect.

**Written Papers**: You will compose three argumentative papers of 5-7 pages each over the course of the semester. I will distribute writing prompts approximately two weeks prior to the due date of each paper. Together these assignments will comprise 60% of your final grade in the course. The first essay is worth 10%, and the second and third are each worth 25%. Please consider the following standards to guide your writing this semester, as these will be the criteria I will use to assess your submissions. A-level work will fulfill all of these standards exceptionally, B-level work will fulfill most of them well, C-level work will fulfill the basic/minimum requirements, etc.

   - The thesis statement makes a specific, text-based claim, not a vague or broad observation.
   - The paper must take a substantive position, one this is neither trivial nor obvious.
   - The thesis statement should appear in the first paragraph of the paper.

2. The body of a Human Event paper defends the thesis via a progression of arguments.
   - The opening of the paper provides an overall map of its direction.
   - The body of the paper mirrors the introductory map, and each paragraph builds the case in logical progression.
   - The paper makes an evidence-based case in support of the thesis. Accordingly, the paper also anticipates and addresses potential objections.

3. Evidence from/analysis of the primary text(s) form the backbone of the paper’s defense of the thesis.
   - Textual evidence constitutes the foundation of the paper’s argument. The paper cites the sources of evidence in a consistent & recognized academic style.
   - No outside sources are permitted.
   - Analysis offers plausible explications of the texts that show how the meaning of the cited evidence helps develop the argument.

4. Human Event papers adhere to fundamental style elements.
   - The paper uses proper grammar & word choice (including gender neutral & inclusive language).
   - The author proofreads the paper to avoid errors, wordiness, unnecessarily complex phrasings, and excessive use of passive voice.

**Reading & Participation**: This course is organized as a college seminar, which means that you are as responsible for developing its quality and richness as I am. In practical terms this means coming to class each day prepared to discuss the day’s assigned readings. Your contributions here may involve bringing up points of clarification, voicing specific points of disagreement with the author(s), drawing connections between present and past readings, or providing other stimulating and illuminating observations. You need not agree with or even enjoy the assigned readings, but your contributions to our daily discussion should demonstrate careful preparation and familiarity with each reading’s basic ideas. Class discussion is worth 20% of your final grade. I will assess your participation here twice during the semester—at the midpoint and end—according to the following general criteria:

**A-Level**: You arrive each day thoroughly prepared with specific comments and questions regarding the day’s assigned reading(s). These comments and questions reveal careful observation and thorough interrogation of the reading’s various points. In addition, you occasionally initiate discussion on your own (without my prompting) and invite your peers to respond. Rather than dominating our time together, you listen carefully to your peers’ remarks and respond to them readily and constructively.
**B-Level:** You participate in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. It is clear that you have done the assigned reading. You pay attention to your peers’ comments.

**C-Level:** You participate intermittently, and you often display more willingness to discuss broad/general questions than specific/concrete elements of the reading. You demonstrate a lack of preparation and/or a lack of interest in your peers’ ideas. You may participate quite often, but in doing so you tend to dominate conversation to the detriment of others’ contributions.

**D & E-Level:** You seldom (if ever) participate. When you do participate, you fail to demonstrate familiarity with the day’s readings. You may also fall in this range if you inappropriately demonstrate hostility toward your peers’ views or a basic unwillingness to consider perspectives alternative to your own.

In sum, your discussion grades will stem from your ability to take the assigned readings as serious opportunities to contemplate various perspectives on human experience in a group setting. Given the nature of our subject, this discussion can occasionally become lively and/or heated. In these cases we will not shy away from disagreement or criticism, but we will maintain a code of respect between discussants in order to maximize the productivity of such dissent. Criticize ideas rather than people, and be sure to support your disagreements with clear evidence from the text. Rather than attempting to “win the debate” or to convince your peers to adopt your position, be open to challenges to your own views and be prepared to weigh your peers’ contributions fairly in your mind. For further information about discussion conduct, see the policy on “Disruptive Behavior” in this syllabus.

**A Note on the Readings’ Substance:** Because The Human Event is an Honors seminar, the readings I’ve assigned here are generally of a greater length and challenge than might otherwise be expected in a 200-level course. You should be prepared to dedicate a significant amount of time each week to reading and class preparation. In addition, our subject matter demands that we occasionally look at perspectives or topics that you may find offensive. Again, while I will never expect you to alter your fundamental views on these matters, I do expect you to approach them as an adult during our time together in class. This means that I expect you to be able to overlook personal disagreements with the text and engage it as a piece of scholarship. Put another way, you are absolutely permitted to voice any substantive disagreements with the assigned readings, but you are not entitled to ignore or dismiss them whole cloth on the basis of these disagreements. If you have any further concerns here, please feel free to come chat with me.

**Peer Review Days:** Because one goal of this course is to help you develop your ability to write arguments, twice during the semester we will hold in-class review workshops where you will exchange essay drafts with a peer. The comments you receive in these workshops should help you refine your work for final submission, but generating thoughtful comments for your peer should also help you become more attuned to the standards of good writing. Your grade for each workshop will stem from the quality of your prepared draft and the quality of the comments you provide to your peer. Together these workshops are worth 10% of your final grade.

**Discussion Questions:** For every class meeting you need to prepare at least two questions for group discussion that will help us unpack the day’s assigned reading(s). See the last page of this syllabus for information about formulating effective discussion questions. You may type and print out these questions or handwrite them on a piece of paper (you may not bring them to class in any digital form). Twelve times over the course of the semester I will randomly collect questions at the beginning of class, assess them, and provide you with feedback on their quality for future question formation. Together these discussion questions are worth 10% of your final grade. At the end of the semester I will drop your question submissions with the two lowest scores.

**NOTE:** Should you be absent on a day where I collect discussion questions, you may only submit questions for a grade if you have an excused absence for the day (see “Due Dates & Late Work” in the following section). As a result, it is in your best interest to attend class every day with prepared questions!
Points for All Assignments (200 Total):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 3</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion (2)</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review Days (2)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions (10)</td>
<td>20</td>
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Grades: Letter grades for the semester are calculated on a straight percentage scale based on the number earned out of the total points in the course.

A+ = 200 – 195 (100% - 97.5%)
A  = 194 – 185 (97% - 92.5%)
A- = 184 – 179 (92% - 89.5%)
B+ = 178 – 175 (89% - 87.5%)
B  = 174 – 165 (87% - 82.5%)
B- = 164 – 159 (82% - 79.5%)
C+ = 158 – 155 (79% - 77.5%)
C  = 154 – 139 (77% - 69.5%)
D  = 138 – 119 (69% - 59.5%)
E  = 118 and below (59% and below)

NOTE: Scores of C-, D+, or D- do not exist at ASU. An E is equivalent to the more conventional F score.

Course Policies & Information

General Classroom Behavior: I expect you to arrive to class on time and prepared to discuss and extend the day’s assigned reading(s). You should have access to the readings during discussion, either via printout or a PDF on a laptop/tablet/phone. You are only permitted to use electronic devices in class for accessing readings. You may not use these devices for taking notes, checking social media, or for any other purpose (including audio recording the discussion). If I notice that you are using an electronic device for any reason other than accessing readings, I will dismiss you from class and you will accrue an absence for that day. In addition, please do not attempt to complete outside work for other courses during discussion, and refrain from having side conversations with peers. Repeated infractions of these rules will result in dismissal from class and a possible report filed with the Dean of Students.

Course Communication: I will disseminate information about the course in class and especially via email. Students should make a habit of regularly checking their ASU email accounts for messages from me.

Attendance: For Human Event classes, you are permitted two absences over the course of the semester without penalty. That is the equivalent of an entire week of class. These absences should help you account for the various issues that come with being a young adult: Inexplicable illnesses, automobile troubles, romantic upsets, faulty morning alarms, and similar matters. Because you cannot adequately participate in class if you are not present, each unexcused absence beyond the initial two will result in a 1-point deduction from your participation score (approximately half a letter grade). In addition, anyone who accrues six or more absences during the semester will receive a failing grade in the course overall. Please also see the following section (“Due Dates and Late Work”) for additional information about absences in relation to submitted course work.

I will pass around an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class; it is your responsibility to sign this sheet each day. These sheets are the only record I will have of attendance when assessing participation scores.
Excused Absences: Beyond the two absences permitted in the course, I will excuse additional absences in the case of a University-sanctioned event or unavoidable emergency (truly debilitating illness, death of a family member, etc.). In either case you must provide me with documentation from either a university official or a related professional (i.e. a doctor, psychologist, minister, etc.) that explains the absence.

Religious Observances: If you know that you will miss class during the semester for religious reasons, please come and chat with me during the first two weeks of classes so that we can plan accordingly.

Due Dates & Late Work: If you can provide me with documentation similar to the above that explains why you cannot meet an assignment deadline, I will work with you to make sure that you have the opportunity to receive full points on the missed assignment. This may entail an extension on a paper or the acceptance of discussion questions after the deadline. Otherwise, the following standards apply to the various assignments in the course in terms of due dates and late work. Note that the two permitted absences in the course do not excuse you from any assignment due dates—these dates are firm!

Written Papers: All three argumentative papers must be submitted on the days indicated in the Course Schedule via the Safe Assign interface in Blackboard. All papers are due by noon; I will use the submission time stamp to assess this deadline. If you miss this deadline but submit the paper before midnight on the same day, I will accept your paper but reduce your final score on it by an entire letter grade. After midnight on the due date, I will still accept late papers within three days but will halve your final score on them. Because technological glitches do occur from time to time, it is in your best interest to submit papers well before noon on the assigned day to ensure that you make the deadline.

Discussion Questions: At the beginning of many classes I will collect your prepared discussion questions. If you are late to class on these days or miss the day entirely without a documented excuse, you will receive a 0 score for the submission.

Peer Review Days: Peer reviews require both a fully prepared draft and your presence in class on the indicated day of the review. If you fail to bring prepared materials to class or if you fail to attend class on the day we have a writing workshop without a documented excuse, you cannot participate in the review process and you will receive a 0 score for the assignment.

Grading of Assignments: I will assess grades according to the expectations noted in this syllabus and clarified in class. Those who seek additional feedback on how to improve their performance on future assignments should feel free to stop by my office hours or schedule an appointment with me to chat. Those who feel as though they have received an unsuitably low grade on an assignment should also plan to meet with me after 24 hours but within one week of receiving the grade (I call this the "24/7 Rule"). You should utilize the initial 24-hour period to compose a cogent, written argument as to why you believe you deserved a higher grade on the particular assignment. This argument should rest on the explicit standards set forth in the course. It should NOT be based on a peer’s performance, how the grade will affect your GPA, etc. Under extremely rare circumstances I will reevaluate an assignment grade, but you should be aware that this process could also potentially result in a lower score than the one you initially received.

Academic Integrity: All work in this course must be the product of your original and independent effort. As ASU students you have agreed to adhere to ASU’s Code of Academic Integrity, which contains the following statement: “Each student must act with honesty and integrity, and must respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments.” I will not tolerate cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, recycling scholarship, or any other acts of academic dishonesty in this course. Engaging in such activities may result in a final grade of E or XE (academic dishonesty), an investigation or hearing, sanctions (such as loss of registration privileges), and possible expulsion from the Honors College and ASU. For more information see https://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity.
**Academic Accommodations:** Those who feel that they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss their specific needs. Students in this case must be registered with the Disability Resource Center and submit appropriate documentation. For more information please visit the DRC website at https://eoss.asu.edu/drc.

**The Barrett Writing Center:** 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 other courses. The Center’s goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so please take advantage of its services. For more information, please visit the Center’s website at http://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center/.

**Multiculturalism & Ethics at Barrett:** 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.

Moreover, the Barrett community is committed to upholding values of academic, professional, and personal honesty of the highest order. We believe that ethical and respectful behavior is one of the most important measures of the worth of an individual and, as such, the overall integrity of our community as a whole.

**Final Note on Disruptive Behavior:** Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class. An instructor may withdraw a student from the course when the student’s behavior disrupts the educational process per the policy “Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior” (you can find more information at http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm201-10.html). It is up to the instructor to define appropriate behavior, but this generally includes keeping course discussion focused on assigned topics, maintaining a cordial atmosphere, and using tact in expressing differences of opinion. The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities accepts incident reports from students, faculty, staff, and other persons who believe that a student or student organization may have violated the Student Code of Conduct.

**Course Schedule**

Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. I will notify you of these changes in advance in class and via email. It is your responsibility to note these changes when I announce them.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WK 1 TU</th>
<th>Introduction to the Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1: On Order</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>WK 1 TH</td>
<td>Descartes: Excerpt from <em>Discourse on (the) Method</em> 1637 Blackboard</td>
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<td>Locke: Excerpt from <em>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</em> 1690 Blackboard</td>
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<tr>
<td>WK 2 TU</td>
<td>Hobbes: Selections from <em>Leviathan</em> 1651 Blackboard</td>
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<tr>
<td>WK 2 TH</td>
<td>Leibniz: “The Monadology” 1720 Blackboard</td>
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<td>Hume: Excerpts from “Of Miracles” &amp; <em>Natural History of Religion</em> 1748/57 Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WK 3 TU</td>
<td>Rousseau: Excerpt from <em>Discourse on Inequity</em> 1754 Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**<strong>Distribute Paper 1 Prompts</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(Semester) ***Representative Syllabus: Assignments, Readings, and Policies will vary by semester***

**WK 3 TH**  
Voltaire: *Candide, or Optimism* (Ch. 1-15)  
1759  Book

**WK 4 TU**  
Voltaire: *Candide, or Optimism* (Ch. 16-30)  
1759  Book

**WK 4 TH**  
*Peer Review Day: Bring a completed outline of Paper 1 to class.*

**Paper 1 due by NOON on MONDAY, WEEK 5**

**Unit 2: Suppression & Rebellion**

**WK 5 TU**  
Bentham: Excerpt from *Panopticon: Or, the Inspection House*  
1791  Blackboard

**WK 5 TH**  
Wollstonecraft: Excerpt from *Vindication of the Rights of Women*  
1792  Blackboard

**WK 6 TU**  
Bolivar: “Angostura Discourse” & “Panoramic View...”  
1819/29  Blackboard

**WK 6 TH**  
Douglass: Excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*  
1845  Blackboard

**WK 7 TU**  
Marx and Engels: Selections from *The German Ideology*  
1846  Blackboard

**WK 7 TH**  
Selections from “First Annual Report of Oneida Association”  
1849  Blackboard

**Distribution of Paper 2 Prompts**

**WK 8 TU**  
Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener”  
1853  Blackboard

**WK 8 TH**  
Nietzsche: “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life”  
1874  Blackboard

**WK 9 TU**  
*No Class – Spring Break*

**WK 9 TH**  
*No Class – Spring Break*

**Unit 3: The Return of the Repressed**

**WK 10 TU**  
Martineau: Selections from *Letters on Mesmerism*  
1845  Blackboard

**WK 10 TH**  
*Peer Review Day: Bring a completed outline of Paper 2 to class.*

**Paper 2 due by NOON on MONDAY, WEEK 11**

**WK 11 TU**  
Marryat: Selections from *There is No Death*  
1891  Blackboard

**WK 11 TH**  
James: *The Turn of the Screw* (Ch. 1-10)  
1898  Book

**WK 12 TU**  
James: *The Turn of the Screw* (Ch. 11-24)  
1898  Book

**WK 12 TH**  
Freud: *On Dreams* (abridged)  
1901  Blackboard

**WK 13 TU**  
Freud: “Anxiety”  
1917  Blackboard

Jung: “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious”  
1936  Blackboard
Formulating Discussion Questions

Consider the following standards as you prepare discussion questions for each class:

1. A good discussion question is specific—it highlights a particular aspect of a text for exploration.
   - **Bad**: What is Leibniz’s main point?
   - **Better**: What precisely does Leibniz mean by the term “monad”?
   - **Good**: How does Leibniz’s notion of the “monad” anticipate his understanding of God?

2. A good discussion question is substantive—it encourages thought about a text along new, critical lines.
   - **Bad**: What are your personal feelings about Bentham’s panopticon?
   - **Better**: Would the inhabitants of Bentham’s panoptic really act as orderly as he implies?
   - **Good**: What assumptions about human nature does Bentham rely on in discussing the disciplinary utility of inspection/surveillance?

3. A good discussion question is open—it prompts a multitude of potentially interesting answers.
   - **Bad**: Does Silko construct Emo as the primary antagonist in Ceremony?
   - **Better**: How does Emo’s antagonism toward Tayo reflect larger issues of race in Ceremony?
   - **Good**: How do similarities between Emo and Tayo explain Emo’s treatment of Tayo in Ceremony?

4. A good discussion question is (often) connective—it references earlier texts to illuminate present ones.
   - **Bad**: Why might Marryat’s accounts of spiritualist séances resemble Martineau’s account of mesmeric healing?
   - **Better**: How do the descriptions of ghosts in Marryat and James differ?
   - **Good**: How does Freud’s particular understanding of anxiety help illuminate the actions of the governess in The Turn of the Screw?

**General Principle**: Good discussion questions go beyond mere “information recall” to inspire your peers to contemplate, criticize, and synthesize course material in a creative manner.