

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **



"Gods of the Modern World" by José Clemente Orozco

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SYNOPSIS:

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. The readings in this class are all drawn from primary texts, and explore such topics as the relationship between the individual and society, the role of divinity in shaping human action, and the nature of our ethical obligations to the self and others. Coursework emphasizes critical thinking, discussion, and argumentative writing.

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.

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Norton Anthology of World Literature, Package 1 (volumes A, B, C): *Beginnings to 1650*, Third Edition (ISBN-10: 0393933652)
2. Shakespeare, W. *Measure for Measure*. Dover Publications, 2011. (ISBN-10: 0486408892)
3. Any style guide of your choosing (must be up-to-date). Recommended: *MLA Easy Formatting Style Writing and Grammar Guide* by Shawn Lorenzen (2012; ISBN-10: 1479229261), or *Cite Right, Second Edition: A Quick Guide to Citation Styles--MLA, APA, Chicago, the Sciences, Professions, and More* by Charles Lipson (2011; ISBN-10: 0226484645)

Some readings will be posted to Blackboard (BB). Please check the site (go to <https://my.asu.edu> and find our class site under “Courses”) frequently for readings, focus questions, online discussion, announcements, etc.

MULTICULTURALISM

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. I hope that you will contribute your 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 in our course discussions. Thoughtful discussions on multiculturalism and diversity will enhance each person's experience within and beyond the classroom.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

WEEK 1:

Introduction

Unit 1: Ancient Greece

WEEK 2

Plato’s *Apology* and King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (BB)
Plato, *The Republic* (BB)

WEEK 3

Plato, *The Republic* (BB)
Euripides, *Medea*

WEEK 4

Sophocles, *Antigone*
Aristotle, selections from *Politics* and *Ethics* (BB)

Unit 2: Faith and Spirituality

WEEK 5

Book of Genesis
Bhagavad Gita (Norton) and the Introduction by Barbara Stoller
Miller (BB)

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

WEEK 6

Writing workshop #1
Koran

WEEK 7

Confucius, *Analects*
Augustine, *Confessions*
Paper #1 due

Unit 3: World Literature

WEEK 8

Tale of Genji
The Pillow Book

WEEK 9

Fall break (No class)
Artwork analysis -- see Blackboard for more details

WEEK 10

Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* -- General Prologue and Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* -- Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

WEEK 11

The Thousand and One Nights
Writing Workshop #2

Unit 4: Justice, Power and Politics

WEEK 12

Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*
Las Casas, *The Destruction of the Indies* (BB)
Paper #2 due

WEEK 13

Montaigne, "Of Cannibals"
Machiavelli, *The Prince*

WEEK 14

Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*
Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*

WEEK 15

Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*
Thanksgiving (No class)

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

WEEK 16

Writing Workshop #3
Wrap-up; self/course/instruction evaluations

Final paper due

“... and so from little sleep and much reading, his brain dried up and he lost his wits.”

- Cervantes

“Measure is alien to us, let us admit it to ourselves; what we itch for is the infinite, the unmeasured. Like a rider on a charging steed we let fall the reins before the infinite, we modern men, like semi-barbarians -- and attain our state of bliss only when we are most -- in danger.”

- Nietzsche

ASSESSMENT:

This course will be a dynamic, discussion-based class that demands a high level of engagement from the students. Students are required to complete all assigned readings and come to class prepared for discussion. The final grade for the course will be based on participation (30%), three written papers (60%), and quizzes and short writing assignments (10%).

Participation (30%)

Your participation grade will be assessed by the quality of your in-class and online contributions, and your participation in in-class group activities. Things that will help improve your participation score include: coming to class prepared, contributing productively and thoughtfully to the discussion at least once per class meeting, responding to your classmates' comments (online or in class). Things that will hurt your participation in class include: being disruptive (talking to your neighbor, texting, forgetting to put your mobile on silent), being unprepared, checking e-mail or online shopping, sleeping in class, being late, not bringing the text(s) to class.

I recognize that it seems odd to *demand* participation, and yet, this class will not function without your engagement. I want to hear what you think of the texts and the ideas. Some of them are very challenging; our class is a place for you to take (intellectual) risks, to ask questions, to share insights and respond to one another seriously and generously. I would also like to see you connect the texts to current events or ideas and your own personal experiences. As a class, we'll explore the ways in which these texts remain relevant and/or important many many years later by asking how these texts speak to contemporary issues.

Together we will determine what counts as meaningful discussion and develop a participation rubric, but this class demands respectful engagement with one another and with the texts. Participation will be assessed daily. You will get an F if you are absent or act like it; you will earn marks for sustained engagement, including coming prepared, contributing original ideas and insights to the discussion, and responding thoughtfully to a classmate's contribution.

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

A note on readings: **Plan/expect to spend at least 3 hours outside of class reading, rereading, annotating, and preparing for each class meeting.** It is impossible to play catch up in this class, so plan ahead and finish the readings before you come to class.

As you read, you must keep a reading journal, where you take note of the thesis (where applicable), themes, interesting quotes, and/or responses to the focus questions. In addition to the focus questions on Blackboard, ask yourself the following questions while reading:

- What questions is the author asking?
- What assumptions is the author making?
- What controversial claims does the author make, and what are the possible objections?
- What interesting (non-obvious, original, thought-provoking) question does the author make and why is it interesting?
- What conclusions does the author draw, and what are the implications of those conclusions?

Asking yourself these questions forces you to take a stance of curiosity toward the reading, and will help you prepare thoughtful responses to our texts. You should be able to answer these questions for each text before you come to class.

Quizzes and short writing assignments (10%)

We will do daily quizzes to test reading comprehension. These quizzes are just to help you know how closely you should be reading and do not test interpretation. We will also have occasional reading response activities, in which I will ask you to reflect on and respond to the author's arguments, or compare two readings. These will either be assigned in advance or as an in-class writing activity.

Short papers (60%)

Each student will write one three-page paper and three five to six-page papers. The three-page paper will be worth 10%; the longer papers will be worth 15, 15 and 20% respectively. Short papers are an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to critically analyze the texts, to synthesize ideas and concepts, and develop insightful, original arguments. Your papers will be graded on accuracy of interpretation and understanding, quality of argument, expression, and originality.

Small and important details: These papers must be double-spaced and stapled in the upper left hand corner, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Do **not** include a title page, but do include your name, the course number and the date at the top of the first page. Please use a reasonable font (e.g., Times 12 pt or Ariel 10 pt).

Large and important details: I will be assessing your ability to develop a clearly articulated argument and gather evidence from the text in support of your claims. Quotes constitute the paper's basic evidence, and should be treated as the "objective" source material to which all readers can refer. Analysis of the primary text forms the backbone of the paper's defense of a thesis; I will be assessing your ability to "unpack" the meaning of what you deem to be key quotes. (Note that you are not allowed to use outside sources in your essays, as this course is

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

based on the analysis of the primary texts themselves.) A well-written term paper has a clear and compelling thesis statement that describes your argumentative position. A well-written paper flows logically, from the introduction through the body of supporting evidence to the conclusion. Finally, a well-written paper contains proper citations of the text, and uses proper grammar and spelling. Don't be sloppy with your writing – do not write the paper the night before it is due and please proofread.

Tip: The Barrett Writing Center will welcome you with open arms! See below for more details.

THE HUMAN EVENT WRITING PAPER STANDARDS

I will hand out a more detailed rubric in class to guide you as you write your essays. The elements outlined below form the basis of all Human Event argumentative papers, and therefore constitute the fundamental criteria of evaluation for *all* Human Event classes.

1. A Human Event paper contains a clear thesis statement.

- The thesis statement makes a specific, text-based claim, not a vague or broad observation.
- The paper must stake a substantive position, one that is neither trivial nor obvious.
- Human Event papers are typically 5-7 pages, and the thesis statement should appear in the first paragraph.

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 and analysis of the primary text(s) form the backbone of the paper's defense of a thesis.

- Textual evidence constitutes the foundation of the paper's argument. The paper cites the sources of evidence.
- 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 and word choice including gender neutral and inclusive language.
- The author proofreads the paper to avoid errors, wordiness, unnecessarily complex phrasings, and excessive use of passive voice.

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

GRADING KEY

The grading will be on a traditional scale of 100-98=A+, 97-93=A, 92-90=A-, 89-88=B+, 87-83=B, 82-80=B-, 79-78=C+, 77-70=C, 69-60=D, 59 and below=F.

A-level work will demonstrate mastery of the material and will go far beyond the minimum requirements of a particular assignment; in addition, there will be few or no mistakes.

B-level work will exceed the requirements of an assignment and demonstrate strong competency with the material; some mistakes, but no egregious errors.

C-level work will meet the requirements of an assignment but demonstrate only basic comprehension of the material; some mistakes and potentially a major error.

D-level work will fail to meet the requirements of an assignment and demonstrate little or no content comprehension; many mistakes and more than one major error.

F-level work will fail to meet the requirements of an assignment and have little merit as a demonstration of knowledge or ability.

BARRETT WRITING CENTER

The writing center is staffed by Barrett students who have completed both sections of The Human Event. They are available for individual tutoring to help you improve your writing and critical thinking skills. For more information, go to <http://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

If you submit work that is not your own, you will be fully disciplined in accordance with university policies. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty are strictly forbidden and will result in a failing grade for the assignment, the class, and disciplinary action with the Dean. It is your responsibility to be aware of, understand, and adhere to the rules and regulations of The Barrett Honors College.

POLICIES

- **Attendance:** Daily attendance is required. Each student is allowed two absences, with no explanation necessary. Additional absences will negatively affect your final grade (e.g., taking you from a B to a B-). The instructor reserves the right to fail those who miss twenty percent of the class meetings or more for any reason.
- **Short paper drafts:** I do not read drafts, but if you come see me, I will give you detailed feedback on your thesis statement and outline.
- **Penalty for late assignments:** You will be given two no questions asked, no penalty extension days to use when you wish. They must be used together, on one assignment.

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

One day = 24 hours, therefore if you take a two day extension on a paper due on a Friday at 12pm, you will be required to submit the paper to Blackboard by 12pm Sunday and drop off a paper copy by 8:30am Monday. Once the two days are used up, assignments handed in late will be accepted with a penalty of 10% per day.

- **Graded papers:** I will return graded papers approximately two weeks after you submit them (with the exception of the final paper, which will be available for you to collect the first day of spring term).
- **Regrading policy:** If you think the grade I gave you on an assignment is wrong, you may submit it to be regraded. It must be resubmitted within one week, with a paragraph explanation as to why you think my assessment was incorrect and why the paper deserves a different grade. Please refer to our grading rubric when making your case and remember that grades are earned, not given.
- **Electronic devices:** You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in class if you are referencing relevant readings. Do not use the laptop or tablet to check e-mail or Facebook or shop for shoes because that will significantly affect your overall participation grade. (It will affect your grade for the worse, just to be clear).
- **Course content:** Some of the assigned texts contain adult content, such as sexuality, coarse language and violence. If you are not comfortable with such themes and content, please come see me and we will discuss possible options and alternatives.
- **E-mail etiquette:** Please include a salutation (“Dear Dr. Brian”, for example), and refrain from using text message abbreviations. I know it’s e-mail and we all receive hundreds of them a day/week, but good communication skills are important.
- Unless you are otherwise instructed, all assignments are to be submitted to Blackboard and directly to the Instructor.
- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance. You must come to class prepared and ready to participate in discussion. Please bare in mind that oftentimes philosophical literature must be read twice or three times to facilitate comprehension.
- Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who would like to discuss course requirements and accommodations are asked to see the instructor within the first week of class.
- The syllabus is a contract between the student and the teacher. If you come back on Tuesday, you agree to abide by the terms I have laid out in the syllabus. While I reserve the right to make small changes to the reading schedule, policies or due dates, I agree to not make any significant changes to the syllabus without consulting the class.

HON 171: THE HUMAN EVENT

** SAMPLE SYLLABUS **

TIPS FOR SUCCEEDING IN THE HUMAN EVENT

In September 2012, *The New York Times* published a piece entitled “Tip Sheet: How to Succeed in College.”¹ Their advice, based on a broad set of experiences and feedback, to give you a sense of what you need to do to succeed at college. Here I’ve picked a few of their pieces of advice and explain how they will help you succeed in this class in particular.

“Live in the academic moment”

Another way of saying this is: *No whining*. We all complain about the amount of work we have to do and we all procrastinate and we all worry about how well we are doing, but do not dwell in self-pity or freak out about how many points you have. Just do the work.

“Don’t study in your room”

I recommend you do not do the readings for this class in bed. The readings are too dense, too hard to do while you’re drifting off to sleep. You won’t remember them, and you can’t properly annotate and take notes while you are lying in bed.

“Get connected to campus life”

There are two ways in which connecting to other people and groups will help you in The Human Event. First, you need to find a balance between school work and extracurricular activities that works for you. As you explore and find activities that interest you, you need to learn good time management skills. Second, you need to connect with your classmates and learn to work collaboratively. Talk to them about the readings before class, discuss your paper ideas with your peers, give each other substantive comments and feedback, and help each other with editing. A more collaborative writing process will benefit all of us; it will be easier/less painful for you to write your papers, which will then be of significantly higher quality, and therefore much more enjoyable for me to read and grade.

“Always go to class”

In class, you will learn how to express your ideas and arguments clearly and engage in substantive discussion with your professor and peers. Those are valuable skills (that’s why participation is worth 30% of your final grade) and you can’t earn participation marks when you’re eating potato chips in your dorm.

“Take care of yourself”

Related to the previous point: You cannot attend class if you are very sick and you will get sick if you do not take care of yourself. If you stay up all night, eating candy and playing video games, you are not going to be particularly alert and engaged during class. See also: importance of “get[ting] connected to campus life.”

“Go to office hours”

Yes, please do! I would like to see each of you at least once this semester, both to help you with the readings and the papers and to get to know you as people.

“Be patient”

University will at times be overwhelming, and this class will be hard. Be patient with yourself -- *you have never done this before*. Show up (by which I mean be physically present and intellectually engaged), perhaps with a smile, and do your work.

¹ I recommend you read the entire article, they offer good advice. The full text is available at: http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/how-to-succeed-in-college/?_r=0.