LS 152L.08: Introduction to the Humanities

Roger Dunsmore

The University of Montana

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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION: Liberal Studies 152 is basically a selection of readings from classical literary texts from 1300 C.E. to the present in Western Civilization. (European texts are in the form of translations into English from the original language in which they were written.) A MODEST attempt to include some sense of the art and architecture, as well as the historical context, will be included. This is a discussion course; i.e., students are expected to come to each class session PREPARED to discuss the reading assigned for that day, or the general lecture for that week. (Attendance at ALL the General Lectures to all Liberal Studies sections combined is required of students enrolled in this course. General Lectures are given twice on Thursdays, at 11:10-12 noon ULH 101 OR at 7-8 p.m. in SS 352. Your fourth credit for this course is from the General Lecture Series.) Sensitivity to fellow students; i.e., knowing when to LISTEN rather than speak, as well as the QUALITY of ones verbal contributions, are stressed.

ABSENCES: Since we have only 28 class meetings during the semester (plus the final exam session), and since each class session is one hour and twenty minutes in length, only two absences during the semester will be permitted without affecting the student’s grade. Out of basic courtesy to the instructor and the class, students who know ahead of time that they will need to be absent are asked to inform the instructor. This facilitates the instructor’s ability to make sure students get the assignment for the missed day. The bottom line is COMMUNICATION=let me know what is going on if you are going to or have had to miss a class.

WRITING: This is a WRITING course. The major part of your grade will be based on your writing performance. I am not so much interested in writing that is merely academic as in writing that is experiential, in writing that presents the CONNECTION(S) between an idea or some information or historical event and YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE. I tend to promote writing that is personal and subjective, as long as it has a clear and direct connection to the particular text or period we are studying that week. I am more interested in the expression of the RELATIONSHIP you are developing with a text, idea, or historical event than I am in what you know about that thing. WRITING for this class will consist of:

1. Once a week, a written question on the reading for the given week or on the previous day’s/week’s discussion is to be signed and turned in at the beginning of each Thursday class period. They will be returned in due time, and used to permit a more thorough exchange between students and the instructor.

2. Short, one-two page, typed responses to 10 of the 14 General Lectures. All student must turn in written responses to the first 4 of the general lectures. Your first written response, then, will be to the lecture by Paul Deitrich on 1/30, this Thursday. Your written response to this lecture is due on Tues. 2/4. Attendance at ALL lectures is mandatory, and will be the basis for a portion of class discussion on Thursdays. Written General Lecture response papers are due on the TUESDAY following the lecture. DO NOT SUMMARIZE the General Lectures! Instead, look for some specific point, idea, image, or
information that is important to you and ELABORATE on that PARTICULAR moment in
the lecture, in the light your own experience. Every other Thursday the best responses
from the previous week's lecture will be read out loud, anonymously, by the instructor in
class. If you don't wish to have your work read out loud in class, please write PLEASE
DO NOT READ IN CLASS in bold letters across the top of your paper. I repeat, DO
NOT SUMMARIZE LECTURES!

3. LARGER PAPERS: Two 3-4 page papers will be due, the first on March 13th, the
second on May 8th. These may be a significant expansion of a shorter paper, or a whole
new topic. Be looking for likely topics that are engaging for you as you read, listen, discuss
this material. The instructor will suggest possible topics to be considered when we get
closer to the deadlines. Again, I am looking for the developing relationship between you
and the material, not just what you know or think, but how that is connected to your own
life experience, both past and present. Please do not try to give me what you think I want.
Be real, take risks, let go of your normal self-censors, tell it like it is for you, find that
which is at stake in your own life.

4. All written work should be TYPED. My eyes are 64 years old and have read thousands
and thousands of papers. Make it easy, mechanically, for this reader.

GRADING: Each longer paper will count 25% X 2==50%.
Each shorter, General Lecture response paper will count 3.5% X 10==35%.
Class participation, including quality of discussion, quality of listening, weekly written
questions on the reading or previous class discussion, will count 15%.

FINAL EXAM: Our final exam time is scheduled for Tues., May 13th, 1:10-3:30 in this
classroom. I do not give a final exam as such but will use this period as our last class
session, usually to read/discuss the best of the final papers.

MUSIC: Perhaps the most serious limitation of this course in presenting selected cultural artifacts
of Western Civilization over the past 700 years is in the area of music. In an effort to at
least begin to recognize this limitation, each student will be asked to open one of our 28
class sessions (plus final session) with a song of their own choosing. This will be your way
of introducing yourself to the rest of the class. At that time give your name, year in school,
major, home place, and a brief account of how the song you have chosen matters to
you==why did you choose this particular song?

TEXTS:

1.) The Inferno, Dante
2.) Selected Essays, Montaigne **
3.) The Prince, Machiavelli.
4.) The Tempest, Shakespeare.
5.) A Modest Proposal, Swift. **
6.) The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake. **
7.) Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Douglass.
8.) *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman. **
9.) *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad.
10.) *Wind From an Enemy Sky*, McNickle.

** Indicates works from the LS 152 Fac/Pac. There is also an Electronic Reserve for this course. You may access this material through the Mansfield Library homepage. Go to catalogue, then course reserve, then to LS 152. Password is “Erasmus.” Or simply go to the ERES website: “Http://eres, liburnt.edu”. Again, us the password.

COURSE THEMES:

(1.) Conscience==what is it? How does one get a conscience? Where does it come from? How is one to understand/relate to those who do not experience the presence of conscience, or whose sense of conscience is radically different from one’s own, or from one’s society’s sense of it? Are there any guidelines for how to conduct oneself in this world if one is or desires to be a person of conscience?

(2.) Nature==What are the basic views of nature articulated in these texts? How have/do these views shape our relationship to the natural world? What sorts of practice(s) might one take up in respect to nature?

Your overall task in this course will be to develop your own relationship with the presented materials of what has come to be called Western Civilization. How are you (or can you become) reflectively engaged with the traditions that your own culture offers to its members?