LS 151L.01: Introduction to the Humanities

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LIBERAL STUDIES 151: INTRODUCTION TO HUMANITIES

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This course is an introduction to texts and ideas that have informed the Western world from ancient times to the present. Many of our ideas today concerning the privileging of word and text; the importance of reason and *logos*; the role of women in hierarchical systems, ideas of justice and law, the importance of religious and philosophical thinking in society; ideas of what is heroic, what is tragic, who is important in society, how to construct social and cultural identities, who is inside and who is other--all come from these seminal texts that we will read and discuss together. All of the texts are provocative and open to many kinds of interpretation. In this course, we will try to open up these texts to multiple viewpoints by first trying to place them in their own historical milieu and time and then discussing the multiple ways they still speak to us thousands of years later. This is our tradition. We must first understand it before we think seriously of ways of carrying forward with the best of our past as we learn from the mistakes and move into a future of hope and possibilities. If nothing else, our tradition has always been one of change and tradition, adopting from others, revising and rethinking. It is never static or stagnant.

Required Texts

1. Bible
2. Fitzgerald’s translation of *Odyssey*
3. Sappho’s poetry and other lyrics
4. Sophocles’ plays
5. Plato’s Dialogues
6. St. Augustine’s *Confessions*

There may be additional short texts or website readings to be assigned.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: In this class, as in many others, your attendance is essential in the give-and-take, the exchange and challenge of ideas at the heart of a true education. This exchange is particularly important in a Humanities course, which asks that you engage in the ideas of the texts, that you talk with others about your responses in order to sharpen your ideas and clarify your positions on important issues that have plagued thinking human beings for thousands and thousands of years. You will hear views you disagree with, some you may find repugnant, offensive, or threatening. I expect civility and a level of discourse that allows other opinions in an exchange of viewpoints and ideas.

To attend class, then is to hear the issues raised, to hear other voices responding to these ideas, and to voice your own response to them. People have said that great books are those that never shut up: they engage each successive generation of readers in new or different ways, they invite us to talk back to them. All of our texts this semester invite us into a serious conversation, a
conversation that matters, a debate that is on-going. Our hearing of other voices is especially
important because many voices have been silenced for too long. Like St. Augustine, we need to
re-member, to put the past and present together with new insights, with new form and substance.
To keep memories alive, to see the past as still present, to see the inter-relatedness of all humans
is part of the message of this course. To miss class, then, is to miss out on a memory—no matter
how small—to miss a link that connects us to other minds. I hope you will understand better why
it is so important to come to class prepared to talk, to share your insights and questions with
others in the class. THUS,
2 absences: lower your final grade by 1/2 grade point;
3 absences: lower your final grade by a full grade point;
4 absences: lower your final grade by 1-1/2 grade points;
5 or more absences means automatic failure. You have missed too much of the course to say that
you have “taken” or “passed the class.

IF there is a family emergency or you are struck by a horrible illness, flu, or accident, the
attendance policy may be a little more flexible. But I need to know if there is a problem; so
please call me, leave a message on my voice-mail, e-mail me, or ask a friend to notify me about
your present problem. Do not wait a week or two and do not just disappear!

Grading: 2 Tests (20% of final grade each); 2 Papers (20% of final grade each) Final essays due
during last week of classes (10%); weekly responses to lectures and informal writings and active
participation (10%)

No late papers or assignments accepted; no make ups.

- One-page responses to the Thursday Plenary lectures to be emailed to me no later than
  Saturday midnight;
- 2 Papers, 3-5 pages. I expect you to continue to build on critical thinking, reading, and
  writing skills. You will be graded not just on content but organization, rhetorical skills,
  strength of your argument including supporting evidence, and adherence to the conventions
  of standard written English. Please note the Guidelines for Writing handout, which will
  clarify for you our expectations for college writing.
- Two one-hour tests
- Take-home essays due no later than December 12
- Active and constructive engagement and informal writings. I expect active engagement with
  the materials, intelligent conversation, and strong insights. I may ask you to do specific
  exercises or come to class prepared with written answers to specific, directed questions.
  yourselves. If you engage in negative, disruptive or inattentive behavior by activities such as
  sleeping, talking, reading non-class materials, you will receive half a grade point less on your
  final grade. If you are extremely shy or have a problem talking before others in a give-and-
  take exchange, please see me privately and we will find other ways for you to engage with
  the materials.

September 3: Introduction
September 5: Genesis
September 10: Genesis
September 12: Prophets

September 17: Job
September 19: Wisdom

September 24: Odyssey
September 26: Odyssey

October 1: Odyssey
October 3: Odyssey (Test #1 on Biblical materials and Homer)

October 8: Sappho’s poetry and other lyrics
October 10: Oedipus

October 15: Oedipus and Antigone
October 17: Antigone Paper #1 is due

October 22: Plato and Greek Philosophy
October 24: Plato

October 29: Plato
October 31: Plato

November 5: No class
November 7: Intro to New Testament

November 12: Gospels
November 14: Gospels

November 19: Gospels
November 21: Letters of Paul (Test #2 on Greek and New Testament materials)

Thanksgiving Break

December 3: Augustine’s Confessions.
December 5: Augustine’s Confessions Paper # 2 is due

Dec 10: Confessions
Dec 12: Last Day of Class and final essays due

No final exam during finals week
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>DICTION</th>
<th>RHETORICAL SKILLS</th>
<th>GRAMMAR, MECHANICS, USAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>Clear thesis, fully developed, specified, illustrated; compelling argument; originality in concept or development</td>
<td>Syntax fluency; variety; even elegance</td>
<td>Accuracy; freedom from clichés; sensitivity to connotation</td>
<td>Unity—control of ideas, global and paragraph level; Coherence—fluid movement between ideas; transitions organic rather than mechanical; especially apt and fresh opener and closer; Clear sense of audience and consistent tone</td>
<td>Flawless</td>
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<tr>
<td>B*</td>
<td>Responds relevantly to assignment; clear and interesting; ideas well developed and supported</td>
<td>Smooth; various; clear; occasional awkwardness or infelicity</td>
<td>Accurate; vocabulary broad enough to express ideas clearly, without monotony</td>
<td>Unity—control of ideas, global and paragraph level; Coherence—transitions clear, perhaps somewhat mechanical; movement between ideas clear but may lack grace; non-redundant opener and closer; Clear sense of audience</td>
<td>Not more than one or two minor errors</td>
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<td>C*</td>
<td>Clear thesis with sufficient support; ideas may be obvious, lack originality, or merely re-present class discussion, rehash received opinion</td>
<td>Minimal variety, but relative fluency; occasional awkwardness does not interfere with communication</td>
<td>Adequate to convey meaning broadly but deaf to nuance; inadequate to precise analysis</td>
<td>Unity—control of ideas globally, perhaps some lack of focus at paragraph level; an occasional non sequitur; Coherence—movement between ideas generally clear, though unity not reinforced through style; transitions generally mechanical but clear; adequate opener and closer; Sense of audience may be shaky; tone, voice, verb tense may be inconsistent</td>
<td>No pattern of major error—such as fused sentences, fragments, or subject–verb agreement problems;</td>
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<td>D*</td>
<td>Thesis trite, poorly developed; support irrelevant or confusing</td>
<td>Lacks variety; awkwardness interferes with communication</td>
<td>Thin, threadbare; word-hoard too small to allow for adequate idea expression</td>
<td>Unity—inaudible thesis; weak subordination; Coherence—lurches between ideas; perfunctory opener, closer; No sense of audience; student writing for self, in close</td>
<td>Two or three serious errors, four or five minor ones</td>
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<td>F*</td>
<td>Ideas trite, skimpy, obvious and unclear; minimal or irrelevant development</td>
<td>The &quot;F*&quot; paper is usually characterized by the absence of stylistic and rhetorical skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Many errors, major and minor; communication is disrupted.</td>
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**ADDITIONAL CRITERIA (Adapted from ICEA Statement)**

A*—A paper of honor quality (A or B) is characterized by clear exposition or compelling argument, with original thought and effective expression; sensitivity to the nuances of diction and broad vocabulary used with appropriateness (not long words where short ones fit); well-constructed paragraphs and smooth transition; mature sentence structure demonstrating grasp of the rhetorical possibilities of the English sentence; freedom from mechanical errors; and felicity of expression, with an occasional phrase to delight the reader.

B*—A satisfactory (C) paper is characterized by relatively clear focus and purpose, adequately developed thought, sound paragraphing with generally suitable transition, a degree of originality and appropriateness in thought and expression, generally correct sentence structure showing some grasp of the proper uses of subordination and order, and by freedom from mechanical errors.

F—An unsatisfactory or failing grade (D or F) may indicate: lack of focus or purpose, inadequate development or unclear thought, poorly constructed paragraphs, careless expression (including clichés), confused diction, immature sentence structure (comma-spliced sentences, sentence fragments, or a preponderance of short and choppy sentences), and a high density of errors (grammar, mechanics, spelling, mechanics).