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LSH 152.00: Introduction to the Humanities - Medieval to Modern

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Introduction to the Humanities

LSH 152: Spring 2016

Instructor

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About the Course

The second course in the Introduction to the Humanities sequence (though 151 is not a prerequisite), LSH 152 examines selected works of literature and political and philosophical thought from the later Middle Ages to the twentieth century. The course is intended to give students a sense of the contours of Western culture and history over the past seven or so centuries, with emphasis on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, so notable for its fusion of imagination and intellect; the return to the roots of piety known as the Reformation; the revival of classical culture known as the Renaissance; the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century; the Enlightenment and French Revolution; the rise of romanticism and the triumph of the novel in the nineteenth century; and the shock of totalitarianism in the twentieth. In a sense, the course is bounded by Dante's vision of hell on the one side and the living hell of the Holocaust on the other.

Emphasis in LSH 152 is on critical thinking, close reading of primary sources, analytical writing, and historical understanding.

Learning Goals

*To achieve an understanding of the shape of the Western humanistic tradition from the later Middle Ages through the 20th century by reading selected masterworks of the tradition from Dante to Dostoevsky (or Tolstoy) and beyond.

*To be able to read masterworks of different times, places, genres, and categories with understanding.

*To be able to place such diverse literary and philosophical works, whether the *Inferno* or Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, in a tradition.

*To appreciate the influence of this tradition on one's own ways of thinking and seeing.

*To learn to ask good questions of and write cogently about literary and philosophical texts.

Writing Goals

*To formulate, state and support a sound thesis

*To organize and develop ideas logically

*To cite evidence persuasively

*To employ correct and appropriate usage of the English language

Texts

Dante's *Inferno*

More, *Utopia*

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*

Blake, *Poems* (Dover edition)

Wordsworth, *Poems* (Dover edition)

Tolstoy, *Death of Ivan Ilych*

Additional Readings

Many additional readings are posted on **Moodle**. Interspersed among the readings from our texts, we will read selections from the following authors (probably in this order): Erasmus, Luther, Montaigne, Donne, Marvell, Madison, Wollstonecraft, Arendt. The reading schedule for each week, including Moodle readings if any, will be given in class.

Plenary Lectures

On each Thursday from 11:10 to noon, a lecture is presented to all sections of LSH 152 in McGill 210. The lectures are more or less synchronized with our readings. Attendance is mandatory. Note that the lectures constitute the fourth hour and fourth credit of this four-credit course.

Requirements

1. Attendance, including at Thursday lectures. Students are allowed three absences per term; a paper will be lowered one grade for each absence over the maximum. *Use your absences wisely.*

2. Each week, on Monday if you are A-H, Wednesday if you are I-P, Friday if you are Q-Z, you are to submit four typed questions regarding the reading for that day. *I will credit questions if and only if they're written in clear and correct English, properly spelled, and cogent.* If your questions aren't credited on any given week, don't take it personally but simply try to do better the next time. At the end of the term I will total your credits, with 10 or more counting as an A, 8-9 as a B, 6-7 as a C, 4-5 as a D, and less than 4 as an F. *This is a W (Writing) class. Take the composition of questions seriously and consider it as part of the course's W component.* I will teach to the questions to a good degree.

3. The philosopher Colin McGinn has observed of Hamlet that he "seems to transform himself almost every time he appears on the stage, so variable is his temperament." On March 11, submit a double-spaced paper of **at least 1500 words** on this observation. Writing must be clear and correct. Quote the text accurately, taking care to cite verse as verse (with line breaks) and prose as prose (no line breaks). Consult the Liberal Studies Writing Standards (to be distributed). Also consult the Writing Center if you wish.

4. On May 6, submit a paper, also of **at least 1500 words**, examining what Tolstoy seems to be saying in *The Death of Ivan Ilych* about the way a human life is to be lived.

5. A take-home final exam consisting of short essays, due at the scheduled time. The exam will be comprehensive in the sense that it may cover any of the readings, from the first to the last. Your weekly questions, first paper, second paper, and final exam will each count for $\frac{1}{4}$ of your grade. Note that in one way or another all of your grade depends on writing.

6. This course requires electronic submission of an assignment *stripped of your personal information* to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Further particulars about this procedure will be provided.

Advice

Don't borrow or copy from online study guides. In fact, don't pluck information about the readings off the Web at all. By no means is everything posted on the Web valid and reliable. Additionally, the date and even the author of information on the Web are not always clear. Note that on neither of your papers are you asked to use secondary sources.

Plagiarism

Strictly forbidden. See the categorical prohibition of plagiarism in the UM Catalog.