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# LIT 494.01: Capstone: Crisis in Humanities

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# LIT 494

## Senior Seminar: The Crisis of the Humanities

Robert Baker / robert.baker@mso.umt.edu

W 3:30 – 6:20

Office hours: W 1:00 – 3:00 and by appointment: LA 219

There has been considerable talk in recent years of a crisis of the humanities. But hasn't this sort of talk been going on for a long time? Are the humanities perhaps always or nearly always in crisis? Why would that be? What, then, might be specific to the crisis of the humanities in our time? And what are the humanities anyway? What does it mean to think of literature, art, philosophy, religion, and history as forming a distinctive region of human culture? Where does the idea that these fields somehow belong together come from? What is the history of this idea? What are the different ideals and debates that have shaped the history of the humanities? Do these ideals and debates still speak to those of you who, if you are taking this course, have devoted an important part of your time in college to the study of literature? What have you been doing? What are the ideals that have shaped your engagement with literature? Could you spell out these ideals? Are they ideals you see embodied in the larger society of which our university is a part? Are they ideals you think should be embodied in the larger society of which our university is a part?

The purpose of this course is to explore these and related questions. The course will be run as a seminar, and all of you will be expected to undertake a final project of your own, a long essay in which you try to cast light on one or more of the issues we address throughout the semester.

We will begin and end with Andrew Delbanco's capacious book *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*. Along the way we will read essays, books, and parts of books by, among others, Paul Kristeller, Kant, Emerson, Immanuel Wallerstein, Eric Hobsbawm, James Baldwin, Adrienne Rich, Paul Ricoeur, Eve Sedgwick, Martha Nussbaum, Sherry Turkle, Dale Jamieson, Jane Bennett, Jedediah Purdy, Tony Judt, and Mark Edmundson.

### Requirements

- Reading of all assigned texts
- Regular attendance and engagement
- Occasional short presentations of texts
- A long final paper of about 20 pages on one of the questions explored in the course

### Texts

- Plato, *The Republic*
- Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*

- Louise Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*
- Immanuel Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis: An Introduction*
- Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*
- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
- Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*
- Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*
- Mark Edmundson, *Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education*
- Essays in course packet on Moodle

## Map of Course

- \* All texts that are not books can be found on Moodle.
- \* Nothing here is fixed in stone: there may be changes as we move along.

### Part I

- W Jan 24* Introduction
- Plato's "allegory of the cave" (in Book VII of *The Republic*)
- W Jan 31* Andrew Delbanco, *College*, pp. 1-101
- Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*, pp. 23-57
- W Feb 7* Paul Kristeller, "Humanist Learning in the Italian Renaissance"
- Charles Nauert, "The Birth of Humanist Culture"
- Andrew Delbanco, *College*, pp. 102-149
- W Feb 14* Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"
- Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?"
- Andrew Delbanco, *College*, pp. 150-86
- W Feb 21* Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" and "Self-Reliance"

Michael Roth, "Taking in the World, Transforming the Self" (in *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters*)

Matthew Arnold, "Sweetness and Light" (the first chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*) (optional)

## Part II

*W Feb 28*

Immanuel Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis: An Introduction*

Marshall Berman, "All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: Marx, Modernism, and Modernization" (in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*)

*W Mar 7*

Eric Hobsbawm, four chapters in *The Age of Extremes*: "The Golden Years" (pp. 257-86), "The Third World" (pp. 344-371), "The Crisis Years" (pp. 403-32), "Third World and Revolution" (pp. 433-46)

Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*, pp. 61-92

*W March 14*

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision" (in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*)

*W March 21*

Adrienne Rich, "Teaching Language in Open Admissions," "Toward a Woman-Centered University," "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" (in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*)

Paul Ricoeur, "The Conflict of Interpretations" (in *Freud and Philosophy*)

*W March 28*

Spring Break

*W Apr 4*

Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You" (in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*)

Martha Nussbaum, "Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature" (the introductory chapter in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*)

## Part III

*W April 11* Sherry Turkle, “Education” (in *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*)

Mark Edmundson, *Why Teach?*, pp. 3-47

*W April 18* Dale Jamieson, “Living with Climate Change” (in *Reason in a Dark Time*)

Jane Bennett, “The Wonder of Minor Experiences” (the first chapter in *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*)

Jedediah Purdy, “What Kind of Democracy” (in *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*)

*W April 25* Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*

*W May 2* Mark Edmundson, *Why Teach?*

Review

\*\*\* *Final Paper Due on Monday May 7<sup>th</sup>* \*\*\*