



# Short Syllabus



## Course Title

WHAT ARE THE HUMANITIES?

## Lecturer

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## Contact details

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## Semester

Fall

## Short Description

According to the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts, the term HUMANITIES includes, but is not limited to, “the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts...” (National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, 1965, as amended)

This course will explore many of the subjects mentioned above, not in and of themselves, but to employ the humanities as a lens (or lenses), as a method, as an approach to the analysis of *any* subject matter. The humanities train us to read/view/hear the entire human-created world around us analytically, to ask “why?” not just “what?” and to identify the inevitable manipulation we experience from the words and images that constantly swarm around us. We will raise questions such as: “How are the humanities like or unlike the social sciences? The ‘hard’ sciences? The arts?” “Do I need to care about ‘old-fashioned’ subjects like philology or rhetoric?” “How were humanities crucial for many of the ‘breakthroughs’ in human history from democracy to the discovery of vaccines for viruses?” and “Who am I?” (The course promises no definitive answer to the latter question.)

The course will be a combination of lecture, class discussion, and short breakout sessions in pairs or small groups in order to practice seeing through and testing the lenses that we discover throughout the semester. Readings or viewings for class will include theoretical articles, stories, novels, films, as well as picture books, music, and memes from social media. Frequent quizzes assist students in keeping up with the reading/viewing and assimilating the lecture and discussion material from class. Short in-class writing assignments plus a required revision of the midterm paper prepare students for the final paper assignment.

## Final grade components

- 15%:** Active participation in discussions and breakout sessions, including report-outs on Padlet
- 15%:** Short quizzes and in-class writing assignments
- 35%:** Midterm paper, 4-5 pages (20% for required draft; 15% for revised version)
- 35%:** Final assignment, 10-12 page essay (30%); course recap (5%)



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## Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three unauthorized absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.\*

## Academic Conduct

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.\*

## Final assignment

Exam dates and submission deadlines are published on the Liberal Arts website. Students requiring an extension for a final paper must submit an Academic Committee Request Form to the Liberal Arts office in advance of the deadline. Late papers will be subject to a point deduction.\*

## Additional requirements

Although you will need to bring computers to class for quizzes and discussion or break-out reporting, using electronics for non-class activities alienates you from the learning experience and distracts the students sitting around you, not to mention the lecturer in front of you (*who, yes, can see what you are doing*). In fact, you are strongly encouraged to take notes by hand. Numerous studies indicate that taking notes on the computer leads to less comprehension and less recollection than the hand-brain connection established with pen and paper. Finally, this is an inclusive class. Insensitivity toward other students or lecturers, no matter how different from you, has no part in the humanities, or anywhere. We are all in this together. That is part of what it means to be human.

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\* See Liberal Arts academic handbook for further details