



Short Syllabus

Course Title

What are the Humanities?

Lecturer

Professor Judith Deutsch Kornblatt

Contact details

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Semester

Fall

Short Description

According to the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts (NEH), the term HUMANITIES includes, but is not limited to, “the study and interpretation of the following: language ...; 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 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 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 ask why the humanities so easily attach themselves to other areas of inquiry: Environmental Humanities, Medical Humanities, Digital Humanities, Humanities and the Arts, Humanities and Religion, Humanities and Democracy. And 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 answer to the latter question.)

The course will be a combination of lecture and short breakout sessions, in pairs or small groups, to practice seeing through and testing the lenses that we discover throughout the semester. Readings or viewings for class will include theoretical articles, stories, poems, novels, films, as well as picture books 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, breakout sessions/forums
- 15%:** Short quizzes and in-class writing assignments
- 30%:** Midterm paper (20% for original; 10% for revised version)
- 40%:** Final paper



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Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three 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.

Additional requirements

Although you are encouraged to utilize electronics in class, browsing the web and texting alienate you from the learning experience and distract 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.