

HUMA 3200 – Questions of Humanity in World Literature

Mondays 16:30-17:50 / Fridays 12:00-13:20

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Office Hours: By email appointment

I. Course Description

This course will, through the eyes of literature, explore and discuss the major issues that encompass various aspects of our daily life, society and the world that we live in. The core questions – What is humanity and how does it make us ‘human’? What is the meaning of life and how do we define it? – will be at the heart of our discussions as we read through the philosophical and artistic contemplations of numerous thinkers and writers in modern times.

To explore a wide spectrum of human experiences and answers to these core questions, this course chooses representative works of literature from a variety of cultures and traditions. To create relevance between the course content and students’ everyday life, the course also provides various in-class activities and writing assignments that help students develop deeper reflection and critical thinking skills in face of the fundamental questions of humanity.

II. Course Theme & Reading

Dates	Content & Reading
February 21, 24 & 28	Introduction: The meaning of human existence and identity
March 2, 6 & 9	The Existential Question – “The Book of Ecclesiastes”, <i>The Bible</i> (all by Mar 2)
March 13, 16, 20	Self and Community I – <i>The Plague</i> , Albert Camus (Part 2 by Mar 13)
March 23 & 27	Self and Community II – <i>The Plague</i> , Albert Camus (Part 4 by Mar 23)
March 30 & April 3	Power to the State I – <i>1984</i> , George Orwell (p. 237-286 by Mar 30)
April 6	Power to the State II – <i>1984</i> , George Orwell (p. 287-311 by Apr 6)
April 17 & 20	Humanity in Holocaust – <i>Diary of Ann Frank</i> , Ann Frank (all excerpts by Apr 17)
April 24, May 4 & 8	What Money Can Do – <i>Capital</i> , John Lanchester (all excerpts by April 24)
April 27	<u>NO CLASS</u> (please work on your midterm paper!)
April 29 @ 5pm	<u>Midterm Paper Due</u>
May 11 & 15	A Utopia/Dystopia Future? – <i>The Fat Years</i> , Chan Koonchung (all excerpts by May 11)

May 18	Course Summary
May 31 @ 5pm	<u>Final Research & Reflection Paper Due</u>

III. Intended Learning Outcomes

- To enable students to learn about a variety of stories and experiences in human history through the lens of literature.
- To help students develop a deeper understanding of and gain valuable insights into the nature of humanity and human life.
- To enhance students' analytical and critical thinking skills by formulating their own answers towards the fundamental questions in life.
- To cultivate students' ability to apply lessons learned in this course to issues that are highly relevant to their daily life and personal concerns.

IV. Course Requirements

- Attendance – 10%
- In-Class Participation – 15%
- In-Class Pop Quizzes and Writing Tasks – 25%
- Mid-term Paper – 20%
- Final Reflective/Creative Paper – 30%

➤ **Attendance**

- Attendance and in-class participation are weighed heavily in this course. As ZOOM has a unique feature called the “attentive score”, which tracks students’ focus on the ZOOM window, for those whose “attentive score” falls below 80%, your attendance that day will only be counted as HALF only. For those who attentive score falls below 60%, your attendance that day will NOT be counted.

➤ **In-Class Participation and Pop Quizzes:**

- Students are expected to **complete the reading assignment by the dates indicated in section II of the syllabus** and be ready to discuss and engage in class.
- Pop quizzes will be given from time to time in class prior notice. The quiz usually consists of 2 short-answer questions only and would take no more than 15 minutes.
- After the regular add/drop period (March 10), students who are **absent for 8 class times or more will NOT be able to pass this course.**

➤ **Mid-term Paper:**

- The mid-term paper will be a **5 to 7-page, argumentative paper** on course content up until April 20. **Paper topics will be given on April 17th** in class. Students are welcome to discuss the decided paper topic and content with the professor or TA in advance.

➤ **Final Research & Reflection Paper:**

- Students will compose the final paper in the form of a research & reflection paper. The paper needs to address **ONE fundamental question** about humanity or human life that the course has discussed throughout the semester. It also needs to involve **original research on one**

contemporary issue/event in the world that reflects the core of the fundamental question that you raise about humanity or human life.

- For example, you may discuss the question, “How should the power of the people vs. the government/state be defined?” in light of the social unrest that Hong Kong has experienced since last summer. Or you may ask the question, “What is the strength and weakness of humanity in a large-scale calamity such as a global virus outbreak?” and look into reports on people who have survived major crises in life. Or you may explore the question, “Can money guarantee happiness?” and research on how different people from different cultures or societies answer to this question.
- The paper should be **8 to 10 pages long** (double-spaced; 12-point font or smaller) with proper citation given for the original research conducted. More information on the paper will be given in early May.

V. Class Rules in ZOOM Teaching Mode

- **Attaining the best learning experience –**

To help all of us create the best learning experience, please be mindful of the following:

- Use “raise hand” button to ask a Q or share your view
- Keep yourself on MUTE at all times unless you are called to talk

- **Engage in in-class pop quizzes or writing tasks with INTEGRITY –**

While it may be harder to catch attempts of cheating (e.g. googling or texting your classmates for answers) or plagiarism (including using google translation) during in-class pop quizzes/writing tasks in ZOOM, any attempts discovered would result in an automatic ZERO on the course and a report to the Student Disciplinary Committee on the university level.

- **Video & audio mode must be turned ON while the course is conducted in ZOOM –**

Just as you would naturally show your faces and be ready to talk in a regular classroom setting, it is a **MUST** that you have **BOTH** your video and audio function turned **ON** while class sessions take place in ZOOM. Failure to do so would entail an absent for the session even if you are in the meeting room.

- **Respectful & moderate use of CHAT function**

To avoid too much distraction in class, chat function should **ONLY** be used in the following scenarios –

- You have an important question to raise to the professor, TA, or student helper but fail to get their attention.
- You prefer to raise the question without disrupting the flow of the session.
- You would like to help answer another student’s question raised in chat.
- You would like to comment on another student’s comment without disrupting the whole session too much.

Also, the chat messages will mainly be monitored by the TA or student helper, rather than the professor, in order to ensure the smoother flow of the session.

