

## Foundation of Western Values – Antiquity to Early Medieval

HON 101, 4 Credits

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Honors Program

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**Course Description:** The course is team-taught. The professors come from different fields, have different styles, and display very different senses of humor. If it seems that we are disagreeing with each other, we probably are. We want to expose students to the reality that scholars do not agree – on either the answers or even the questions. Thus, the goal is not to have students consume knowledge passively but to become active creators of knowledge. This creation occurs through dialogue and the testing of ideas against logic and evidence. We are happiest not when students conform their ideas to ours but when they provide their own insight that they defend through logic and evidence.

### Texts:

Survey text:

Hunt, Lynn, et. al., *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2005)

Primary texts:

*Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. by Andrew George (Penguin: 2000)

*Access Bible: College Edition* (Oxford University Press: 2002)

Homer, *Iliad*, trans. by Robert Fagles (Penguin: 2003)

Sappho, selected poems

Hesiod, *Theogony* (Oxford University Press: 1999)

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* – on-line at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html>

Aristophanes, *Clouds* (Hackett)

Plato, *Six Great Dialogues*, trans by Benjamin Jowett (Dover: 2007)

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. by Maxwell Stanforth (Viking: 1964)

Christian Creeds: Nicene, Nicene-Constantinopolitan, Chalcedonian

Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford)

### Syllabus

The course follows the readings roughly chronologically, and we spend as little or as long as needed on each text. All texts are assigned with at least a week's notice. Each primary text or related texts have the following assignments associated:

- An on-line quiz on the relevant chapter from Hunt due prior to first discussion of the document
- A Document Analysis Worksheet (DAW) due prior to first discussion of the document
- An on-line quiz on the primary document due prior to the first discussion of the document
- An on-line posting to the discussion posting for the week due at any point during that week
- Participation in one of the weekly student-led chat

We use Hunt's survey text only to provide historical background information. Importantly for the Hunt material, class time does not review material students have read; rather, it augments and applies that material to our understanding of the primary texts. All other activities outside of class are about preparation for discussion rather than reflection after the discussion. Class time, therefore, makes little sense without having read the assigned chapters in Hunt and done the other preparatory work.

We assume that students are in the class voluntarily and that they want to be challenged intellectually. We further assume that they therefore place their studies above other mundane considerations and strive to attend class unflinchingly and to be prepared and engaged in each class meeting. To that end, participation is factored into the final grade, measured primarily on verbal intervention during class.

We understand that American primary and secondary education does not encourage independent thinking or the articulation of ideas. And we appreciate that students have been socialized to provide pre-designated answers to problems. Also, we are aware that Americans fear public speaking more than death – literally. Finally, we are sensitive to the fact that many honors students are in fact quite shy. However, this course is discussion-based and Socratic. We do not provide answers but rather a forum for students to develop their own answers. Students must speak in order to engage in this process.

### **Grading policies:**

The ultimate goal of the Honors Program is not a diploma or a job, but the ability to think critically, to develop cognitive abilities, and to achieve the skills to realize one's full possibilities. These goals require critical reading and critical writing. Pressed for time as we are, we concentrate on mastering the limited material of the class – but not through rote memorization. Rather, we, alongside learning a baseline of empirical data, conceptualize historical connections, explore relationships, and look for arguments and analyses to make sense of our texts. To that end, we combine in-class rigor with frequent on-line quizzes and exams that require constant vigilance for class preparation.

Students consider this a demanding course. A “100 level” course is not meant to be easy; rather, it is meant to be challenging for those taking their first course in that field. As this course is Honors, they often find our expectations either more than they expected or simply different, especially if they have not had this sort of course before. Since we employ a combination of Socratic, student-centered, and argumentative pedagogies, it may not be similar to most of their previous courses; therefore, they must be prepared to work. Many students find the discussions, exams, and essays a true test since we expect them to take ownership of the learning process and not wait for the professor to tell them what they need to know. Thus, they are repeatedly told never to ask, “Do we need to know this for the exam?” If we have read it or talked about it or can make inferences about it, it is worth knowing. Similarly, they should not expect a study guide – if we have read it or discussed it (though not necessarily both) they are responsible for it.

**Quizzes (10%):** On-line quizzes include: syllabus quiz used as a shakedown for on-line testing; Hunt quizzes for each chapter; document quizzes. Since the quizzes are not proctored, it is obviously possible and permissible for students to use outside sources, including colleagues from class. We use the syllabus quiz as a shakedown quiz. Completion of the syllabus quiz indicates students' understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions of the course syllabus. After the due date of the syllabus quiz, ignorance of these terms and conditions are not accepted as an excuse for any exceptions to the syllabus. The Hunt quizzes draw directly on answers from that text while the document quizzes tend to be more interpretative.

**Exams (20%):** Exams consist of a combination of take-home essays and in-class components. In-class components are closed book and individual. The essays must follow all of the expectations for other writing assignments.

**Writing (40%):** There are several types of writing assignments of varying lengths. Students are expected to move beyond the ability to summarize content. Their writing is expected to show an understanding of the basic concepts from the course, change over time in core ideas, analytic frameworks, and causality and agency. Further, their writing must use evidence that distinguishes between primary sources (documents, graphics, images) and secondary sources (texts, graphs, maps), analyzing and critiquing that evidence. Most importantly, their writing must reveal that they recognize writing as an argument and debate. The writing consists primarily of three-page essays that may be revised. The final revised grade of the last draft is the recorded grade. Students may be required to submit more than one draft. Failure to submit a required revision results in the lowering of the last grade on the essay by a letter grade.

Papers must follow all rules of Standard Written English and Chicago Style citations (grammar, spelling, and style do matter).

**Verbal intervention during class (20%):** By participation, we do not mean having the correct answer, speaking at every opportunity, or speaking for the sake of saying anything. Instead, we want to think about the questions raised by the readings and our discussion. We have no pre-determined direction for any given discussion. Therefore, questions are just as valid. Indeed, any relevant comment is valid since it reveals an attempt to engage with the ideas we are studying. We expect full participation from all class members every day. Students are penalized for not speaking and coming unprepared; they are rewarded for speaking and being prepared (a rubric, not attached, is included in the full syllabus).

**Oral Final (10%):** Regardless of any written or on-line component to a final exam, students take an individual, oral final of approximately 20 minutes with the instructors during finals week. This oral final consists of a single, broad question about a theme from this course, followed by clarifying questions (a rubric, not attached, is included in the full syllabus).

**On-line participation:** On-line participation (chat, chat leadership, discussion posting) is evaluated separately and differently from in-class participation. It is primarily based on students' willingness to engage the material and their peers on-line on a regular basis. Failure to complete any on-line participation assignment is factored into the final grade based on the following:

- No missed assignments = one grade step improvement (a "B" becomes a "B+")
- One missed assignment = no impact on grade (a "B" remains a "B")
- Each missed assignment beyond one = one grade step reduction in the final course grade (a "B" becomes a "B-")
- Six missed assignments = automatic "F" for course (a "B" becomes an "F")

The following assignments are factored into the on-line participation grade:

- Leading a student-led chat at least once during the semester
- Attending a student-led chat every week, excluding the first week
- Making a discussion posting every week, excluding the first week. Acceptable postings include thoughtful and informed postings that comment upon the question posed and also react to comments posted by other members of the class. Students are permitted and indeed expected to disagree with viewpoints expressed but need to do so in a respectful manner. Acceptable participation is based on insight into the topic, but organization and writing also matter. In other words, a posting is not instant messaging. At the most basic level, there is a word minimum of 100 words in order to be considered for credit, which allows students to post a concise paragraph.

**Attendance:** We pass around a dated sign-in sheet each day. Students are responsible for signing the sheet on the appropriate day. They record their attendance by striking out their name on the attendance sheet. We assume perfect attendance as the baseline for student engagement. However, since events may arise which preclude attending class, we allow a single missed class before poor attendance begins to affect the final grade. Thus, there is no impact for missing one class. For every class missed beyond the first absence, however, the final grade decreases a step (for example from a "B+" to a "B").

**Example:** Assuming a student earned a final grade of "B+", missing days results in the following grade consequences

0 absences B+ = B+ (no impact)

1 = B+ (no impact)

- 2 = B (one grade step lower)
- 3 = B- (two grade steps lower)
- 4 = C+ (three grade steps lower)
- 5 = automatic F regardless of all other considerations

**Improvement:** Since the expectations for this class are often more demanding than anticipated, an additional curve may be granted to measure individual progress during the course of the semester. In effect, an improvement curve measures the students' ability to improve as they engage with and adapt to the course. Improving their scores from the first to the final on-line assessments, the first to final essay, engagement in participation, etc. may lead to an upward curve.

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