

HNRS 2020 Section Themes Spring 2019

Section 1001, MW 9:30am-10:45am; Diehl and

Section 1007, MW 11:00am-12:15pm; Diehl

This section of HNRS 2020 will use Dennis Ford's *The Search for Meaning* as a jumping off point to explore the questions: Where and how do human beings find meaning in existence? Each of the eight worldviews discussed in Ford's book (i.e., myth, philosophy, science, postmodernism, pragmatism, archetypal psychology, metaphysics, and naturalism) will be paired with a work of literature, which will not only offer illustrations of the different worldviews (or, ways of making meaning), but also provide some possible answers to the questions at the heart of this section of the class. The literary texts that we will study include: Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*; Margaret Atwood's *Power Politics*; Sarah Treem's *The How and the Why*; the artwork of Kara Walker; Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*; Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*; and Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*.

Section 1002, TR 9:30am-10:45am; TBA

Section 1003, TR 2:30pm-3:45pm; Young

In this class, we will spend our time in the pursuit of happiness. Doesn't that sound like a good idea? A great idea, in fact? Hopefully it will be enjoyable, but in addition to that, the notion of happiness is worth some serious intellectual attention. We each use the word in our daily conversations in many ways, without giving it a lot of thought, but it is one of the most powerful and influential ideas in the history of human thought and action. Many, perhaps most people, would say that it represents their highest goal and ultimate aim in life. Its pursuit is even mentioned in the US Constitution as one of the three inalienable rights with which all humans are endowed by their Creator. Questions we will explore include: Why is the pursuit of happiness placed in such exalted company? What is it? Why do we want to achieve it? Is it the same as well-being? How do cultural views on happiness differ from each other? During this course, we will read and discuss a number of philosophical perspectives on happiness, as well as studying ideas found in psychology, sociology, political science, literature, film, and television.

Section 1004, TR 1:00pm-2:15pm; Browne

This section of "Critical Thinking about Great Ideas" relies on 2 major texts: Louis Pojman, *Who Are We? : Theories of Human Nature* and A.C. Grayling, *Ideas That Matter: The Concepts That Shape the 21st Century*. While the class will experience a broad array of ideas that provide the basis for various religious and political perspectives, the focus of the course will be on a few ideas that have in turn generated dozens of related ideas. Each of the 6 major ideas will be studied by (a) reading from the basic documents on which the idea relies, (b) studying criticisms of each idea, and (c) reading a play capturing the ethical dilemmas implicit in each idea (the professor will buy any plays that are not available online. Each of the 6 major

ideas will be discussed in terms of its primary epistemology (how it decides to believe something), whether the idea is supportive of or rebellious against existing power structures in the society within which it emerged, and the value assumptions implicit in the thinking of those who embrace the idea. The 6 major ideas encountered in the course are the following, listed with a hint at what we will read for each idea:

1. Religious Faith----sacred texts from assorted religions---Lucas Hnath, *The Christians*
2. Greek Humanism---Plato's Dialogues---Sophocles, *Antigone*
3. Scientific Revolution---Letters from Galileo's Trial and his *Letter to the Grand Duchess*-----Bertolt Brecht, *Galileo*
4. Democracy---Bill of Rights and Federalist papers---Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*
5. Markets---Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*----Greg Kotis, *Urinetown*
6. Feminism---Amartya Sen, "100 Million Missing Women" and Juliet Mitchell, *Women: the Longest Revolution*----Caryl Churchill, *Vinegar Tom*

All writing assignments will focus on the skill of integration or synthesis or what some would call creative thinking. The final project will be to persuade us that we should have included a "7th major idea. In other words, you are invited to become a co-creator of this course. To do so you will need to demonstrate your understanding of the process we have used to examine each of the other 6.

Section 1005, TR 11:30am-12:45pm; Morgan-Russell

This section of HNRS 2020 uses Leslie Stevenson's *Thirteen Theories of Human Nature* to explore some influential ideas in Western and Eastern thought (from among Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Plato, Aristotle, the Bible, Islam, Kant, Marx, Freud, Existentialism, Darwin, Feminist Theory, and Secular Humanism) on the question of what it means to be human. In addition to Stevenson's book, we'll read several novels (including Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let me Go* and a couple of others) and view a film (Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*) to see how they attempt to answer the same question through literature and film.

Section 1006, MW 4:30pm-5:45pm; Jones

This section of "Critical Thinking About Great Ideas" will explore selected systems of thought that humans have used to organize their lives and communities. Why have ideas like Greek humanism, Buddhism, evolution, feminism, socialism, and Islam, for instance, endured? What do they have to say about the Big Questions: Why are we here? Where did we come from? How should we act? We will use Leslie Stevenson's *Thirteen Theories of Human Nature* as an introductory guidebook through some of these theories and supplement that with assorted primary texts from within the idea systems themselves. For instance, the memoir *I Am Malala* will provide a Pakistani Muslim girl's perspective, and the graphic journalism text *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* will update us on socialist critiques of contemporary capitalism. Emphasis will be on critical analysis of the ideas and on synthesizing what they have to say.

Section 1008, MW 4:30pm-5:45pm; Rzicznek

In this section of HNRS 2020, we will explore groups who have been historically marginalized in American society, and our book list, consisting of graphic novels, reflects how those who identify as a being marginalized choose “fringe” texts to more accurately represent their experiences. Additionally, we will discuss academic concepts, such as Intersectionality, Queer Theory, and Feminism, and their connections to what it means to be a compassionate, informed ally and citizen in our contemporary culture.

Section 1009:

Section 1010: TR 4:00pm-5:15pm; Emery

This section of HNRS 2020 focuses on the following “great ideas”: Judeo-Christianity, Humanism, Science, Democracy, Marxism, Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism. The readings are too numerous to list here, but include selections from the Bible, Plato, Franklin, Galileo, Darwin, Emerson, Rousseau, Jefferson, Hitler, Marx, Sartre, Freud, and Wollstonecraft, as well as plays, novels, and stories by Ibsen, Hawthorne, Melville, Hemingway, Upton Sinclair, Kate Chopin, and Alice Munro.

Section 1011, MWF 9:30am-10:20am; Schulz

This section of HNRS 2020 will explore “great ideas” through the lens of Dennis Ford’s *The Search for Meaning*. The book’s worldviews of myth, philosophy, science, postmodernism, pragmatism, archetypal psychology, and naturalism will be used as a base for exploration into the meaning of existence and how different worldviews contribute to individual definitions of meaning. To illustrate Ford’s selection of worldviews the course will also focus on the following texts: *Cat’s Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* by Gloria Steinem, *Power Politics* by Margaret Atwood, and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera. In addition, there will be smaller readings to provide examples and potential answers to questions of meaning related to different worldviews and their coexistence within individuals. The course will focus on discussion and written responses to readings to build understanding and justification for a final project that asks students to illustrate their own search for meaning.

Section 1012, TR 9:30am-10:15am; Thompson

This section of HNRS 2020 seeks to continue developing critical thinking skills introduced in HNRS 2010, exploring a broad worldview through the lens of '3 Pillars of the Human Experience: Rationalism, Faith and Empiricism'. We will read books by Jim Cramer, Eugene Herrigel and Stephen Hawking, along with excerpts of works by influential writers/thinkers including Machiavelli, Plato, Sophocles, Descartes, Carlyle, Nietzsche, Sun Tzu, Cogan, and Tolstoy. These works will serve as a framework to explore political, economic, social, cultural and intellectual ideas and perspectives and how they influence the lives of individuals and shape our communities and the world.