

California State University, Sacramento

Honors 3, Section 3
“Great Books and World Civilizations, 1500-present”
Spring, 2017

Professor Ted Lascher
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calls after 6 p.m.)
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Meeting time and place: Mondays
Wednesdays, 1:30-2:45,
Shasta Hall Room 254,

Office hours: Mon. 3:00-4:30 &
Wed. 3-6; and by appointment

Catalog Description

Discussion seminar on the major issues in philosophy, literature, history, art and religion of the world from the modern ages through the 20th century. The course will consider non-western and western civilizations. Topics for analysis will include the relationship of the individual and society, knowledge, morality, religious belief, and the meaning and value of life. Open to students enrolled in the GE Honors Program. 3 units.

Overview of Course

This course is the third and final installment in the “Great Books/Great Ideas” component of the Honors program. Continuing with the seminar format of the previous courses, students will explore readings from a variety of perspectives all with the goal of engaging in discussions of major themes and issues that have shaped the human experience. Covering the period roughly from 1500-2000, we will delve into works of literature, philosophy, art, social science, history, and culture in order to discover our own place in human history. Major themes and issues we will explore include: freedom/slavery, race/class/ethnic identity, citizenship/civic engagement, human rights/civil rights, faith/reason, and intercultural conflict/cooperation. Underlying all these discussions will be one major question: how can people be encouraged or made to avoid harm to others?

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Synthesize ideas from different genres of literature or literary styles
- Form their own world views through analysis of major themes presented in literature
- Critically analyze literary works
- Express ideas clearly and cogently in written and oral communication

Readings

Bernal Diaz, *The Essential Diaz*
Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*
Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives*
Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*
Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*
Other shorter readings will be made available on SacCT

Assignments

During the semester, students will choose an issue/problem to explore in a variety of written formats. First, students will write 3 short papers (4-5 pages) demonstrating their ability to present, explain, analyze, and critique arguments and views presented in the readings or in class. Students must use the primary text along with three additional outside sources to prove their argument. Sources can come from current news articles, op-ed pieces, blogs, popular fiction, screenplays, poetry, and scholarly articles in many disciplines. A reasonable sampling of sources will be made available on the course SacCT site as pdfs or weblinks. Writing prompts will be developed collectively as a class and posted to SacCT the week before essays are due. Students who earn a grade lower than a B on any of these assignments will be expected to meet with the instructor to revise and resubmit their work. Instructions for revising and resubmitting work will be provided.

Students will also write a longer argumentative essay (10-12 pages) in which they explore their chosen issue across the 5 main texts. Further instructions will be provided.

Journaling

In order to assess student learning over the course of the semester and as part of the larger Honors program, students will contribute either to a weekly journal (private) or the class discussion board (public). This is a more informal opportunity to explore ideas raised in the readings or in class. I am particularly interested in seeing students make connections between the various Honors courses (integrative learning) and asking questions about how ideas are shared in written format (exploring writing conventions and formats based on type of writing or academic discipline).

Grades

Your final class grade will be calculated as follows:

Class participation: 20% (includes attendance and in-class discussion contributions)

Journaling: 10%

Three analytical essays: 45% (15% each)

Final essay: 25%

A passing grade in the class requires passing in all three areas.

Attendance

Since class is a community whose value is dependent on all of its members' participation and contributions, regular attendance is important. Furthermore, class discussions will build on material from previous sessions so failure to attend can lead to greater confusion. Beyond the overall discussion grade, students will be penalized one full grade for every unexcused absence above three in a semester. Excused absences require documentation from a doctor, police officer, probation officer, or lawyer. Your mechanic does not count.

Cheating

No cheating of any sort will be tolerated in this course. All sources (primary and secondary) in papers must be cited and given appropriate credit. We will follow the university policy on academic honesty, which can be found at <http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMA00150.htm>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and require accommodation or assistance with assignments, tests, attendance, note taking, etc., please see the instructor early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made to ensure your full participation in class. Also, you are encouraged to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (Lassen Hall) for additional information regarding services that might be available to you.

Technology Requirements

This class is supplemented by material and assignments on SacCT. Students must have access to a computer in order to complete the course.

Class Schedule Summary (See Detailed Class Schedule on SacCT for specific reading assignments):

Week 1: Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, chapters 1-2

Weeks 2-3: Bernal Diaz, *The Essential Diaz*

Weeks 4-6: Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Week 7: Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, chapters 3-4

Weeks 8-10: Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives*

Weeks 11-13: Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

Weeks 14-15: Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, selections (see detailed class schedule)

