

SGB 213: Critical Assessment in the Humanities

Spring 2018

Goldspohn 22

MWF, 12:00-1:10

Professor: Adam Kotsko, akotsko@noctrl.edu, Seybert 102

Office Hours: MWF 11:15-11:55 and 3:55-4:55 or by appointment

Course Description

As both a continuation and a culmination of the Humanities sequence, this course aims to introduce students to critical perspectives on the humanities while continuing to broaden and deepen students' knowledge of the fine arts, literature, philosophy, and religious thought, focusing primarily on works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A guiding thread throughout is a focus on works that are critical or reflective, both within and across disciplines. Students should be prepared for readings in this course to be in dialogue with readings from previous Humanities courses and with each other.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge/Communication

- Explain the distinctive approach and contribution of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Butler, and other modern thinkers to humanistic study.
- Distinguish among several of the major modern intellectual movements in the humanities.
- Define and use the complex vocabulary and key concepts adopted by contemporary humanist discourse.
- Explain the status of ambiguity in contemporary humanist discourse.
- Communicate ideas on texts clearly and effectively in discussion and in writing.
- Restate accurately someone else's point of view on course topics.
- Participate effectively in discussion by asking genuine questions, listening carefully to answers, and thoughtfully answering others' questions.

Critical Thinking/Application

- Assess and identify the complex innovations undertaken by modern works of visual art, music and literature.
- Employ works of criticism that critique humanistic scholarship and art.
- Evaluate works that often disrespectfully challenge accepted norms of argumentation and presentation.
- Formulate how parody, perversion, inversion and subversion creates unexpected cross-disciplinary comparison.
- Explain and use the complex vocabulary of contemporary humanistic discourse.

Collaboration/Ethics

- Engage collaboratively to learn the difficult technical vocabulary of contemporary humanist discourse.
- Engage seriously and respectfully with works that actively challenge accepted norms of argumentation and presentation.

Required Texts

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>ISBN</i>
Nietzsche	<i>Basic Writings</i>	Modern Library	0679783393
Heidegger	<i>Basic Writings</i>	Harper	0061627011
Sontag	<i>On Photography</i>	Picador	0312420099
Wittgenstein	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>	Wiley-Blackwell	1405159286
Woolf	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>	Mariner	0156628708
Buber	<i>I and Thou</i>	Touchstone	0684717255
Cone	<i>God of the Oppressed</i>	Orbis	1570751587
Butler	<i>Antigone's Claim</i>	Columbia UP	0231118953

Other readings will be provided as handouts and are marked as such on the syllabus: (**). To have easy access to the fine arts materials discussed in class, students will need to use two free online services: YouTube and Dropbox. I will share links as appropriate via e-mail.

Student Assessment

Each student's grade will be based equally on class participation and written work.

Class participation presupposes careful and thorough preparation and serious intellectual involvement in class discussion. Students should come to class not only having read the text through, but having underlined, taken notes, and scanned over the marked text at least one additional time after the initial reading. On the basis of such preparation, students should be prepared for an intensive, text-focused discussion.

My expectation for class participation is that every member of class will be able to contribute with remarks and citations that are on-topic and reflect solid preparation for class. A student who meets that baseline will receive a grade in the **B range** for their participation portion. Students whose contribution is notably lacking—for instance, those who speak very little, who give no evidence of having done the reading carefully, who consistently change the topic in a disruptive way, or whose primary contributions are jokes or personal anecdotes—will receive a participation grade in the **C or D range**. Students who distinguish themselves through some particular service—such as consistently contributing new topics that shape the discussion, serving as a resource for navigating the text, or making a special effort to draw in quieter classmates—will qualify themselves for a participation grade in the **A range**.

The baseline condition for class participation is of course physical presence in class. Absences not only affect the individual student, but the entire group, and the same is true of habitual lateness. Punctual attendance should be regarded as mandatory. Lateness will count against a student's participation for that session, and in extreme cases will be treated as the equivalent of an absence. Particularly in a ten-week term, a small number of absences can quickly add up to a significant percentage of class time missed (10% for 3 absences, 20% for 6). An increasing number of absences carries with it increasing consequences, which are as follows:

- 1-2 absences No grade penalty, in recognition of our shared human frailties. (If students miss fewer than two classes, however, then in cases where a student is at the threshold between two grades, the professor will go with the higher one.)
- 3-4 absences A half letter grade is deducted from the student's final grade for each absence; this penalty may be lifted by doing an absence make-up for each missed class.
- 5-6 absences For each absence, the student *must* complete an absence make-up (described below) to avoid failing the course, and a half letter grade penalty is imposed on the student's final grade which *cannot* be made up.
- 7 absences Automatic failure of the course.

In order to make up for an absence, students must visit a museum or attend a cultural or academic event relevant to the content of the course. They must write a reflection on this experience (2 *full* pages, double spaced), relating it in some way to material that they have studied as part of the Shimer core curriculum. Absence make-ups must be completed **within three weeks** of the absence being made up. Students have ample opportunities to attend events on the North Central campus, in Naperville, or in Chicago. Hence there should be no difficulty in finding an appropriate event or time for a museum visit.

Written work will take the form of a **research paper** engaging with critical scholarship on a work from Shimer's Humanities curriculum. Students may choose a work from previous courses, as long as they have not previously written a paper on that work.

The final grade for the student's written work will be based 90% on the final product and 10% on two writing process check-ins (5% each). Both check-ins must be submitted via e-mail by class time on the date specified; they may be turned in up to a week late for half the credit.

The **first check-in**, due Monday, April 9, will specify which work or works the student intends to write about and give some idea of the general topic or question that will guide their research. (This does not need to be formal or elaborate; the e-mail could read simply, "I want to write about *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and I'm interested in the contrasting imagery of the mule and the pear tree," for example.) **The second check-in**, due Monday, May 7, will consist of a list of at least three potential secondary sources, with a brief explanation of why you think that source may prove useful. For this assignment, students should make a good-faith effort to provide full citations in a recognized documentation style. (Together, these process check-ins will help you practice for your senior thesis prospectus, which asks for the same information, but at greater length.)

Research papers should be guided by a clear question about the work under consideration and must engage with peer-reviewed scholarly sources (journal articles or book chapters). A paper that engages with at least three sources and has a clear guiding question and organization will receive a grade in the **B range**. Papers that engage with fewer sources or show significant problems with focus and organization will receive a grade in the **C or D range**. Papers that go beyond simply reporting the views of other scholars by critically assessing and/or synthesizing them in the service of an argumentative thesis of the student's own devising will receive a grade in the **A range**. Distracting copy-editing errors, sloppy citations, and usage of unusually large

font sizes or margins will result in a grade penalty independently of the quality of the paper's content.

Papers must follow a **recognized documentation style** in the humanities—preferably University of Chicago or MLA—and be **between 2400 and 3000 words** (approximately 8 to 10 pages) in length, double-spaced, in a standard font. **All papers must be submitted via e-mail, using a Microsoft Word or LibreOffice-compatible format (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .odt) or Google Drive.** Please do not submit papers in PDF or Pages formats. All written work for this course is subject to North Central College's plagiarism policy, which can be found at <https://www.northcentralcollege.edu/english/plagiarism-policy>.

All written work is due by the end of the final exam period (midnight on Wednesday, June 6). Students who submit an advance draft of their paper by Friday, May 25, will receive comments from the semester by Friday, June 1, at the latest. Comments will provide guidance in how to improve the paper but should not be construed as the promise of any particular grade.

Class and Reading Schedule

Monday	March 26	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy (Basic Writings)</i> , pp. 31-52); Wagner, "Prelude to <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> " (YouTube)
Wednesday	March 28	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy (Basic Writings)</i> , pp. 52-76); Debussy, "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" (YouTube)
Friday	March 30	Good Friday—NO CLASS
Monday	April 2	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy (Basic Writings)</i> , pp. 76-98, first indentation on pg 141); Schoenberg, <i>Pierrot Lunaire</i> (YouTube)
Wednesday	April 4	Harlem Renaissance: Music (YouTube), Artwork (Dropbox link)
Friday	April 6	Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Radical Mountain" (**); Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum" (**); Locke, "The New Negro" (**)
Monday	April 9	Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art" (<i>Basic Writings</i> , pp. 140-165) First process check-in: Topic
Wednesday	April 11	Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art" (<i>Basic Writings</i> , pp. 165-182)
Friday	April 13	Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art" (<i>Basic Writings</i> , pp. 182-206)
Monday	April 16	Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> , pp. 3-48
Wednesday	April 18	Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> , pp. 51-112
Friday	April 20	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , author's preface, §§1-25 (pp. 3-16), 32-33 (pp. 19-20), 38 (pp. 22-23), 66-77 (pp. 36-41)
Monday	April 23	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§83-109 (pp. 43-52), 151-154 (pp. 65-67), 193-206 (pp. 83-88), 217 (pg. 91), 240-241 (pg. 94)

Wednesday	April 25	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> , pp. 3-48
Friday	April 27	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> , pp. 48-100
Monday	April 30	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> , pp. 100-151
Wednesday	May 2	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> , pp. 151-end
Friday	May 4	Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> , First Part (pp. 53-85)
Monday	May 7	Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> , Second Part (pp. 87-122) Second process check-in: Sample bibliography
Wednesday	May 9	Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> , Third Part, Afterword (pp. 123-182)
Friday	May 11	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , author's preface, Essay I (<i>Basic Writings</i> , pp. 451-492)
Monday	May 14	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy...</i> , Essay II (<i>Basic Writings</i> , pp. 492-532)
Wednesday	May 16	Cone, <i>God of the Oppressed</i> , chs. 1 and 2 (pp. 1-35)
Friday	May 18	Cone, <i>God of the Oppressed</i> , ch. 6 (pp. 99-126)
Monday	May 21	Cone, <i>God of the Oppressed</i> , chs. 7 and 10 (pp. 127-149, 207-225)
Wednesday	May 23	Music: "Gospel and Blues" (YouTube)
Friday	May 25	Butler, <i>Antigone's Claim</i> , ch. 1 Paper Drafts Due (optional)
Monday	May 28	Memorial Day—NO CLASS
Wednesday	May 30	Butler, <i>Antigone's Claim</i> , ch. 2
Friday	June 1	Butler, <i>Antigone's Claim</i> , ch. 3
Wednesday	June 6	ALL WRITTEN WORK DUE BY MIDNIGHT