



Integrative Studies 231A, Human Values, The Arts, and Humanities

Topic: Human Nature

Summer Semester 2006,
Michigan State University

Dr. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last UPDATE: November 03, 2009)

Number	Date	Topic	Reading	Information	Oral Presentations	General Assignments
1	Jul 5	Overview	No reading			
Segment I: Theology - Human Nature and Transcendence						
2	6	Human Nature, Paradigm I: Theological Anthropology	Augustine, book 1, Confessions, (course packet)	Click here		
3	10	Human Nature, Paradigm I: Theological Anthropology	Augustine, book 1, Confessions, (course packet)			
Segment II: Existentialism - Human Nature and Immanence						
4	11	Human Nature, Paradigm II: Modernism	Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism (course packet)	Click here		
5	12	Human Nature, Paradigm II: Modernism	Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism (course packet)			Assignment 1 passed out in class
6	13	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment		Assignment due by 12pm
Segment III: Humanities - Human Nature and Culture						
7	17	Human Nature III: Culturalism	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter I-III, 1-42		Abigail, Jessica B.	
8	18	Human Nature III: Space and Time	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter IV-V, 43-62		Kyle, David, Jessica	
9	19	Human Nature III: Myth and Religion	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter VI+VII, 63-108		Patrick, Ryan, Nick	Assignment 2 passed out in class
10	20	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment		Assignment due by 12pm
11	24	Human Nature III: Myth and Religion	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter VI+VII, 63-108			
12	25	Language	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter VIII, 109-136		Caitlin, Ashley, Leah	
13	26	Culturalism	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter VIII+ review			Assignment 3 passed out in class
14	27	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment		Assignment due by 12pm
Segment IV: Marxism - Human Nature and Society						
15	31	Human Nature V: Working	Marx, Economic Manuscripts, 93-110	Click here	Sabina, Tiffany	

16	Aug 1	Human Nature V: Working	Marx, Economic Manuscripts, 111-140		Jennifer, Victoria, Tricia	
17	2	Human Nature V: Working	Marx, Economic Manuscripts, 140-162			Assignment 4 passed out in class
18	3	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment		Assignment due by 12pm
Segment V: Psychology - Human Nature and the Self						
19	7	Human Nature VI: Development	Winnicott, Human Nature, Part I+II	Click here	Karyn, Fawzia, Leslie	
20	8	Human Nature VI: Development	Winnicott, Human Nature, Part III		Marly1, Carla, Marly2	
21	9	Human Nature VI: Development	Winnicott, Human Nature, Part IV		Mary, Jill	Assignment 5 passed out in class
22	10	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment	Writing Assignment		Assignment due by 12pm
Segment V: Art - Human Nature and Creativity						
23	14	Human Nature VII: Art	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter IX, 137-171		Brie, Jillian, Danielle	
24	15	Human Nature VII: Art	Gadamer, Relevance of the Beautiful, 1-57	Click here	Amber, Brandi, Kristin, Kuda	
26	16	Human Nature VII: Art	Gadamer, Relevance of the Beautiful, 1-57		Torger, Mike, David	
25	17	Exam	Exam	Exam	Exam	

Class Meetings:

Days: MTWTH

Time: 10:20am-12:10pm

Place: 228 Erickson

Office:

Phone: 517.353.9721

Place: 507 S. Kedzie Hall

Hours: directly after class, by appointment and by phone

Exceptions:

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu

Home Phone: 517.337.8524

Webpage

URL: <http://www.msu.edu/~lotz/classes>

(Please check the webpage *regularly* for the current schedule)

Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (and in front of my office)

Course Description:

This integrative studies lecture class will discuss selected aspects of a philosophy of culture by reflecting on the human condition and on some aspects of humanism. In this vein, we will consider the following questions: What does it mean to be human, and why do we need the humanities? How are the humanities differentiated from the natural sciences? After introducing two traditional answers to the question of what human beings are, from the perspective of Augustine (Theology), Sartre (Philosophy), Winnicott (Psychology), and Marx (Sociology) we will - from a general human point of view - reflect on central aspects of the human condition, such as religion, history, culture and art, by studying Ernst Cassirer's *An Essay on Man. Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. In addition, we will discuss the need of the

humanities and the human sciences for a proper understanding of human culture. We will investigate the role that the arts play in this picture by first focusing on some basic aspects of the arts in general, such as the function of the arts and its connection to playing and festival, from the perspective of Gadamer. Finally, we will discuss contemporary attempts to declare the end of humanism by reading the first chapter of Pinker's *The Blank Slate. The Modern Denial of Human Nature*.

IAH Course Goals

Integrative Studies at MSU seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students to engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s); they also encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of other societies. They focus on key ideas and issues in human experience; encourage appreciation of the roles of knowledge and values in shaping and understanding human behavior; emphasize the responsibilities and opportunities of democratic citizenship; highlight the value of the creative arts of literature, theater, music, and arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

Note

Real learning is not properly measured by multiple-choice tests; especially since in the humanities there is no specific content of a sort that may be covered well in standardized examinations, which every student in the humanities should be expected to master. Instead, you will - hopefully - come to recognize that philosophy as a general intellectual reflection on what we are and why we are here, deals with your dignity as human beings and with your intellect and reason, which is best expressed in a form of learning that is based on understanding and insight, and not mere learning by heart. It is hoped that the class will stimulate the view that intellectual activity (and therefore human reality) has to do with the *passion* of thinking, and the passion of *understanding* of yourself and our world.

Specific Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- selected interdisciplinary views on human nature (*theological*: Augustine; *existential*: Sartre; *cultural*: Cassirer; *naturalistic*: Pinker; *social*: Marx; *psychological*: Winnicott)
- the idea that human culture is the expression and objectification of human activity
- the concept of art as one major source and expression of human culture and human nature, including the the purpose(s) of art (imitation, expression, perfection, truth)
- the thesis that every form of academic inquiry presupposes a theory of human nature

Required Texts

- Cassirer, Ernst, *An Essay on Man : An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, Yale University Press, ISBN: 0300000340
- Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, Cambridge, ISBN: 0521339537
- Fromm, Erich, *Marx's Concept of Man*, Continuum, ISBN: 0804461619
- Winnicott, D.W., *Human Nature*, ISBN: 0876306202
- Course Packet (Augustine, Sartre, etc)

Course Packet:

The course packet with additional copies (Sartre, Augustine, Pinker) is available at Budget Printing Center, 974 Trowbridge Road, 517.351.1200; pick up your copy today!

Course Organization

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] discussion time or [iii] response session. Students will be asked to intensively prepare a certain text or part of a text for the next class period.

Course Requirements

- Daily Reading and Studying (around 5-10 pages)
- 5 response sheets
- 5 Thursday writing assignments (2 page response papers)
- 1 group presentation (use Thursday for preparation)
- 1 final exam

Note

The class and my lectures are solely based on the texts selected for class and require a thorough study and preparation of the material. I will primarily lecture on the readings, which will help you to more fully understand the texts. *Therefore* it is not sufficient for students to come to class without having prepared the texts. And indeed, the exams will test whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Class Attendance

I hope and strongly encourage that students attend all classes. However, I will not require attendance, as I think that college students should manage their own class attendance decisions. nevertheless, please be aware that you should not make *me* responsible for a failure that results out of *your* decision. You should be aware that chances to master this class are minimal, if you do not show up for class or if you do not prepare the readings.

Response Sheets

Every student is asked to submit "reponse sheets" after my lectures and our class discussion. Every student can submit up to 5 reponse sheets over the course of the semester and every sheet that you turn in will count 2 points.

[Click here to download the response sheet](#) (Word document)

Note: I will only accept responses that are given on this form.

Make-Up Exam

Students who need to miss an exam for *excusable* reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam. Students who do not excuse themselves ahead of time, fail the exam.

Paper Assignments

There will be five brief paper assignments (600-900 words). The paper assignment should lead you to a reflection and consideration of what we have discovered on the theoretical level about human nature and human culture. I will pass out in class every Wednesday the essay assignment, which you will turn in by Thursday, 12pm. Late turn ins will not be accepted, and, in addition, I do NOT accept submissions by email. You will find my box in 503/507 South Kedzie Hall. It is your responsibility to get a copy of the assignment from a study buddy in class if you missed class on a Wednesday.

Oral Presentations and Study Groups

a) Handout

The oral presentations must in principle be about the readings for class. Every study group, which gives a short presentation, must submit (to the class) a detailed handout one class before the presentation is given, otherwise the team loses points. The handout must contain [i] a three page paper with detailed explanations of selected points of your presentation/text plus [ii] one page with an outline of your presentation/text. A mere outline is not sufficient. The handout must have a length of 3 pages and it should help us to prepare our class sessions. I will mark down every handout that does not include a three page paper.

b) Presentation

b.1.) The oral presentation assignment is twofold: first give a presentation and then lead into a discussion on the topics of your presentation. The purpose of the assignment is (i) to give you practice in public speaking, (ii) to give you a chance to pick the topics that deserve class time, (iii) to share your research with the whole class and not just me, and (iv) to raise consciousness about the dynamics and difficulties of a good discussion. If past evaluations are any guide, even students who don't enjoy speaking in front of others, or who do so poorly — perhaps especially such students — are glad of the opportunity to practice. The presentation should offer a reading of the text for that day. To offer a reading is to take a stand on what the author is saying, and how the author argues it, not merely to point out the presence of certain themes, to ask certain questions, or to give your own views on the same topics. Your presentation should take up to 45 minutes. During this time, you should do all the talking.

b.2.) Wait until you're finished to ask the class questions and lead discussion. Be creative! Try to involve the class in your discussion of the material. Note: do not try to present everything. Choose your issues carefully, and try to explain these in depth. The texts are very complex. So, make smart selections and focus on important points. In addition, I am interested in evaluating how you work as a team/group. Oral presentations are group work!

b.3.) Given that we use every Thursday exclusively for the writing assignments, I also expect that you get together with your group on Thursdays for the preparation of your presentation.

Final Essay Exam

The final essay exam asks you to comment on a quote taken from one of the readings, and to relate the quote to the overall content of the class. There will be three options/topics to choose from.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

5 response sheets	10 points
5 Thursday writing assignments	25 points
1 exam	30 points
1 oral team presentation	25 points
Participation	10 points

	100 points

Grading:

4.0	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87
3	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65
1.0	64 - 60
0.0	< 60

GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

Class Attendance

As mentioned above, I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class

you can come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

Grading Criteria

[Click here to see my grading criteria for oral presentations](#) (not required in this class)

[Click here to see my grading criteria for papers](#) (tentative)

[Click here to see an EXAMPLE of my grading criteria for essay exams](#) (taken from an older class)

Helpful information about oral presentations, paper writing and plagiarism

[Click here to find help on your presentations and your writing](#)

Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use **reliable academic** sources, such as *Britannica Online*, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). The [Internet Eyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources](#)! And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to writing@msu.edu.

Plagiarism

In any essay or exam answer submitted for assessment, all passages taken from other people's work must be placed within quotation marks, with specific reference to author, title and page. *no excuse* can be accepted for any failure to do so, nor will inclusion of the source in a bibliography be considered inadequate acknowledgement. If the marker decides that plagiarism has occurred, the student may be judged to have failed the class.

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in (insert course number here). Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (insert date). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (insert date). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

Note on Attendance

Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class. Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

[Back to classes](#)