



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

Topic: Human Nature

Summer Semester 2009,
Michigan State University

Dr. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last **UPDATE**: November 03, 2009)

Number	Date	Topic	Reading	Information	Other	General Assignments
1	May 18	Introduction				
CLASSICAL POSITION ONE AND TWO: THEOLOGY (Augustine) and EXISTENTIALISM (Sartre)						
2	May 20	Human Nature and Transcendence	Augustine, Confessions, Book 1	Augustine		
3	May 25	University Holiday	University Holiday	University Holiday		
4	May 27	Human Nature and Immanence	Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, pp.17-54	Sartre		
THE QUEST FOR MEANING: FILM (Tarkovsky)						
5	June 1	Existence, Spirituality, Art: Introduction to the Russian director A. Tarkovsky:	Tarkovsky, Stalker (movie); Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, chapter II (download pdf) and Sculpting in Time, chapter V (download pdf)	Tarkovsky (excellent site) Stalker		In class Exam 1 (Sartre + Augustine)
5	June 3	Meaning of Life	Tarkovsky, Stalker (movie); Tarkovsky, Interviews on Stalker (download pdf)	check out this essay	prepare Rousseau	Take-home response paper assignment passed out in class
CLASSICAL POSITION THREE AND FOUR: ROMANTICISM (Rousseau) and CULTURALISM (Cassirer)						
7	June 8	History and Civilization	Rousseau, 2nd Discourse, pp. 16-50	Rousseau		Take-home response paper due
8	June 10	History and Civilization Symbol+Space/Time	Rousseau, 2nd Discourse, pp. 16-50 Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter II+III			
9	June 15	Culture	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter IV-VI			
10	June 17	Culture	Cassirer, An Essay on Man, chapter II-VI			

LANGUAGE, SOCIETY, INDIVIDUAL: FILM (Herzog)

11	June 22	Rousseauism, Language and Culture: Introduction to Herzog's Film	Film, Herzog "The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser"; Herzog, Interview on Kaspar Hauser (download pdf)	Kaspar Hauser	In class Exam 2 (Rousseau + Cassirer)
12	June 24	Rousseauism, Language and Culture	Film, Herzog "The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser"	Werner Herzog	Take-home response paper assignment passed out in class
13	June 29	no class	no class	no class	Take-home response paper due (in my box)

Class Meetings:

Days: MW
 Time: 3:00pm-6:50pm
 Place: Communication 155

Office:

Phone: 517.353.9392 (if you are unable to reach me, please leave a message at 517.355.4490 [dept.])
 Place: 501 S. Kedzie Hall
 Hours: MW after class, by appointment and by phone

Exceptions:

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu
 Home Phone: please ask

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 (503 South Kedzie)

Course Description

Who are we? What are we? What does it mean to be a human being? This integrative studies lecture class will discuss selected aspects of a philosophy of culture by reflecting on the human condition. 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 four traditional answers to the question of what human beings are, from the perspective of Augustine (Theology), Sartre (Existentialism), and Rousseau (Romanticism), we will - from a general human point of view - reflect on central aspects of the human condition, such as religion, history, culture and language, 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. Finally, we will discuss two films: "Stalker" by Andrej Tarkovsky, as well as "The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser" by Werner Herzog.

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 this class is about a general intellectual reflection on what we are and why we are here. The class 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 our world. Intense confrontation with texts is the center of this class.

Specific Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- selected interdisciplinary views on human nature: 1. theological paradigm (Augustine), 2. existential paradigm (Sartre), 3. social paradigm (Rousseau/Marx), 3. cultural paradigm (Cassirer), and 4. natural-cultural paradigm (Tomasello)
- the idea that human culture is the expression and objectification of human activity through language (Cassirer), civilization (Rousseau), and freedom (Sartre)
- the idea that every form of scientific and academic inquiry presupposes a conception of human nature, and that it is important for *every academic discipline* to reflect on this conception

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Cassirer, *An Essay on Man : An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*
- Augustine, *Confessions*
- Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*
- Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*

Course Organization

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] discussion time or [iii] response time. 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
- 2 exams
- 2 response papers

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, in your papers and in the exam you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Make-Up Assignments

Students who need to miss the exam or the movie for *excusable* reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam and movie assignment. I will only accept *official* doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors.

Class Attendance

I hope and strongly encourage that students attend all lectures. 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 (=studying).

Response Sheets

Every student is asked to submit "response sheets" after my lectures. Every student can submit up to 5 response sheets over the course of the semester.

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

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

Response Time

Selected response sheets will be addressed at the beginning of each class. This procedure will help you to clarify problems, reflect on topics, and to find answers to questions that came up during the lecture.

Response Paper Assignments

There will be 2 paper assignments (3 pages, 900 words, 12pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margin). The paper assignment should lead you to a reflection and consideration of what we have discovered on the theoretical level about human nature. I expect well constructed essays that begin with an introduction, present a main claim and are *explanatory*. Mere summaries or simple "reflection" and "I feel 'X'" papers will not be satisfactory. I will pass out in class on selected dates (see schedule) questions, the written answer to which you will turn in the *class after the assignment was passed out* (email submissions are *not* acceptable). Late turn ins will result in loosing 20%-40% of your grade. It is your responsibility to get a copy of the assignment from a study buddy in class if you missed class. I will *not* send you the assignment per email if you missed class.

Movie

We will be discussing one of Andrei Tarkovsky's films in class. Tarkovsky is one of the most acclaimed and famous Russian director of the 20th Century. His films are highly poetical and intellectual. Accordingly, be prepared for an intense visual experience and intellectual challenge. Thinking about Tarkovsky will challenge you on all levels. Accordingly, be prepared to put some research time into the assignment and come with enough sleep to class.

Exams

There will be two brief in-class essay exams. You will be offered a set of essay-questions, one of which you will answer in a brief essay about the material that I discussed in my lectures. Note that mere memorization of what I lectured about will not be a satisfactory preparation of the exam; rather, you should demonstrate that you thought about and *understand* the material. You will not be able to answer the exam question(s) if you did not study the texts.

Participation

You will receive points for participation and (group work) assignments in your discussion section (see below).

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

Lecture:

5 response sheets (to be submitted during the course of the semester)	20 points
2 exams	20/20 points
2 response papers	15/15 points
Group assignments+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

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

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 Encyclopedia 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 (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

Note on Attendance

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.

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