

HUMANITIES 12: AMERICA
SYLLABUS (SPRING 2008)
Reed College and the Oregon Council for the Humanities

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will examine four questions central to the humanities:

1. The relationship between an individual and his or her community, the duties that the individual has to the community, and the rights that community should protect.
2. The nature of love and desire, the ideal of good or proper love, the conflict between love and various social obligations, such as parents and children, and ideals of beauty.
3. The relationship between power and justice, definitions of justice, and the use of the language of justice to hide the exercise of power.
4. The role of knowledge in virtuous actions, what one needs to know to be virtuous, and how central knowledge is to being virtuous.

We will address these questions through the study of key American works of many sorts: histories, philosophical tracts, short stories, and drama. Through the course of the semester, we aim to develop your ability to discuss and present your views in a clear and persuasive manner, both in discussion and in writing. Writing assignments will be short and highly structured, and considerable time in class will be devoted to helping you develop your writing skills. We hope the study of these questions, both in class discussions and in structured writing assignments, will serve as an introduction to and preparation for further university-level study and a broader involvement in community affairs.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SPRING SEMESTER

Participation in class discussions is crucial, and students are expected to read carefully the assigned texts for each class in preparation for class discussion. There will also be four writing assignments, as well as other in-class writing assignments. Due dates for all writing assignments are given on the following page. You must complete each term's assignments before the end of that term, or you will be unable to continue in the course.

It is recommended that you keep an informal journal noting reactions to events or arguments in the texts. Occasionally, we will begin class with a short directed writing exercise in which you will be asked to write down two or three thoughts about the assignment, and a journal will be very helpful for this.

HUMANITIES 11: AMERICA
SPRING 2008
FINAL SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Individual and Community

The Initial Draft and Final Version of the Declaration of Independence
Federalist Paper 10, Federalist Paper 51
United States Constitution (full text and amendments)
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (excerpts)
"Unlimited Power of the Majority in the U.S., and its consequences" (p. 287)+ "Causes Which Might Mitigate the Tyranny of the Majority in the U.S." (p. 305) + "Of Individualism in Democracies" (p. 587) and "On the Use Which Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life" (p. 595)
NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience"
In-class writing assignment #5: *Should we privilege our own conscience over the state's laws?*
Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience"
Declaration of the Seneca Falls Convention
Margaret Fuller, "The Wrongs of American Women, The Duty of American Women"
Writing assignment #6 handed out
Frederick Douglass, "The Fourth of July Oration" + Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (selected poems)
Writing assignment #6 due

Part II: Majority Rule and Minority Rights

Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Chapters 8-16)
Waldo Martin, *Brown V. Board of Education* (pp. 61-86)
Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth" and "The Web of Circumstance"
Paul Lawrence Dunbar, selected poems (in reading packet)
John Hope Franklin, *Three Negro Classics* (Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, Chapters 7,10,14; and W.E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapters 1-3) + Langston Hughes' "I, Too, Sing America" + "Let America Be America Again"
Howard Zinn, *Three Strikes*
In-class writing assignment #7 TO BE HANDED IN AT END OF CLASS
Jacob Lawrence, film + Robert Wernick, "Jacob Lawrence: Art as Seen Through a People's History" & Barry Schwabsky, "Black Exodus"
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Tillie Olsen, "I Stand Here Ironing"
Flannery O'Connor, "Everything that Rises Must Converge"
Waldo Martin, *Brown V. Board of Education* (pp. 121-141, 168-174, 238-240)
Writing assignment #8 handed out: *Summarize each essay's key arguments, compare and contrast the two essays, and evaluate whose argument is stronger and why.*
Martin Luther King, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" and
Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"
Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
Writing assignment #8 due
Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*, Chapter 1, "Aria"
Wrap-up and evaluations