This upper division course is not only designed for students who major or minor in the field of (European) Humanities, but can also be taken to fulfill General Education requirements. Our class is an EXPLORATIONS COURSE in the HUMANITIES and FINE ARTS. Completing your academic coursework in HUM401 will provide you with greater interdisciplinary knowledge, will prepare you to engage in more complex and in-depth studies, and will give you a wider awareness of past, present and future global challenges. It will furthermore help you achieve the following in a meaningful and constructive way:

1) Analyze written, visual, or performed texts or other modes of expression (such as music) in the Humanities and Fine Arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;

2) Describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;

3) Identify issues in the Humanities that have personal, local and global relevance;

4) Demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge in the Humanities.

BOOKS REQUIRED

BOETHIUS CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY, Rev.
DANTE DIVINE COMEDY: INFERNO (Mandelbaum: Translator)
BEDIER ROMANCE OF TRISTAN AND YSEULT (Random House)
ROSS (Ed.) PORTABLE MEDIEVAL READER (Penguin)

(With reference to the above mentioned books, I have ordered the least expensive – and usually abridged – editions available with our campus bookstore, but any other editions are acceptable. They may, however, require substantially more reading.)

Our course is as fascinating as overwhelming in scope. We shall therefore proceed selectively by necessity through the many areas of history, the arts, philosophy, music and literature of the period between roughly 300 AD (C.E.) to beyond 1300 AD (C.E.), with a thorough look at the history of Early Christianity – the very framework for Medieval Society. While learning about Europe’s major achievements and calamities over more than some 1000 decisive years in the making of our modern Western world, we should consider our efforts as a journey not only through the Past, but rather toward ourselves in contemporary and present day conditions. Anyone who, confronted with our materials, could possibly feel or think “I don’t care”, would necessarily indicate that he or she does not care about themselves. Our course work deals with beauty, pleasure, suffering, meaning, foundation - for each one of us!
Our textbook may seem rather small, yet it contains the most basic facts and additionally provides hints and ideas for a great amount of reading, listening, and inspiration. While reading this book – always well ahead of class – is mandatory, your regular presence in the classroom and your careful note-taking during our lectures will be the major key to your learning and academic success. Likewise, you are required to read four major primary (in the case of “The Portable Medieval Reader” only a small selection of texts of your own choosing) – all of them literary or philosophical milestones of Western Civilization. You will write a PERSONAL READING REPORT (i.e. an intimate, personal analysis and evaluation of your private reading experience with these three/four books) of a total of THREE pages minimum for all your readings combined - (font size 12, double-spaced, one inch margins, printed – the same style and presentation standard is required for your final research paper, and MUSEUM VISIT REPORT as well!). More details on these assignments will follow.

Your Personal Reading Report, and your Museum Visit Report - : TWO DISTINCT, TWO SEPARATE ASSIGNMENTS AND PAPERS - are due, both of them, on NOVEMBER 19th – no excuses, no delays. They will not be graded individually and traditionally (grades A - F) but rather will constitute an indispensable component of your class grade by fact of having been written and submitted. If you fail to do so or if any one of these two reports should be missing or lacking in seriousness of topics addressed, contents and INDIVIDUAL (i.e. not academic, but expressing your own feelings!) presentation, you will lose 30% of the criteria needed to earn and determine your final grade.

In addition to your book readings, the semester will include a number of VIDEO or FILM presentations. Do not think of these showings as “easy” days with no urgent need to show up in class. I expect you to incorporate your impressions and ideas about these viewings in your final research paper, in a clear and constructive way. Any pertinent reference to them absent in the research paper, would lower your grade. Please remember this REQUIREMENT if you wish to obtain an optimal grade for your research paper, and thus for your class overall.

Let me explain meaning and purpose of your "MUSEUM-VISIT-REPORT" - the third part of your assignments outside of midterm and final. Our class is taking place every Wednesday, but late in the day, which would make it impossible to visit a museum in an organized "field trip" way, but even if it could be done, it would run counter to the purpose and intention of this mandatory class assignment. You are adults, and there is a choice of art and history museums in the San Diego area (most are located in Balboa Park). The nature of this your course assignment makes it necessary for you to select both museum and object YOURSELF, therefore you may also pick time and moment of your PERSONAL MUSEUM VISIT without outside guidance or interaction. To "pay you back" for this effort and time investment, and to not burden you with an unreasonable request outside your regular class time, it is of much greater benefit to cancel one day of class - November 12th our class will NOT meet -, to make up for your morning or afternoon spent in a museum - at any time of your choosing between now and mid-November your Museum Report is due on the 19th). Textbooks, visual media, reproductions of artwork are useful and fine, but nothing can equal the intensity and power of finding ourselves in front of an original great work of art, which is why I insist that you visit a museum. Take your time and look around, find a theme-related work of art of your personal preference (Painting, Sculpture, any of the Visual Fine Arts pertaining in period, style and significance to your Studies - i.e. works from the Christian Roman period to the High Middle
Ages, i.e. the time between 200 AD and 1500 AD) - and write a TWO PAGE minimum (style format as detailed earlier) paper, explaining WHY you have chosen the item you will select, and its personal impact and meaning for you. This is a truly useful practical application of our work, venturing outside of textbook and classroom - it will be pleasurable for you to go on your "art hunt", and it definitely will enrich your personal study experience substantially.

Most importantly, we will write TWO MAJOR EXAMINATIONS, one MIDTERM in-class examination and one end-of-semester TAKE HOME RESEARCH PAPER of scholarly scope (ours being a 400 level class!). Both examinations will consist of WRITTEN ESSAYS: The Midterm is written in the classroom ( - 75 minutes, two essays from a choice of four topics - and this exam will take place on OCTOBER 15th. Unexcused absence or delay will earn you an automatic “F” grade by default. If you cannot attend this - or any other - examination, or have to miss whatever deadline, you MUST make arrangements to take your exam or to hand in your paper in advance, i.e. EARLIER - , never later than the official due date, in order to be acceptable. In an emergency, you may e-mail your paper to me before the due date’s midnight cut off time, but then must hand in a HARD COPY at your earliest convenience as well, for your assignment to be completed and valid.

Your take home Research Paper will consist of an essay of your choice (from a list of topics handed out to you on NOVEMBER 19th - to allow for three weeks of thorough preparation and meaningful writing). The Final Research Paper must be of MINIMUM LENGTH OF SIX PAGES (exclusive of index, source list, etc.) and is due on our DECEMBER 10th last class session. Finals week will thus be stress-free for you with regard to this HUM405, a benefit you may appreciate during these hectic last days of any semester. Each one, midterm exam and final paper, will earn you 35% toward your class grade, Your classroom presence is mandatory, absence of more than three weeks will lower your class grade by a full point, an A turning into B, etc. If you should miss, without certified medical reason, more than five of our weekly meetings, you will receive a grade "U" - in other words, you failed your class.

Let us RESUME: Your Semester’s work will consist of FOUR distinct and separate assignments:

1) Midterm - October 15th
2) Personal Reading Report - due November 19th
3) Museum Visit Report - due November 19th
4) Final Take Home Research Paper - due December 10th (Choice of Topics will be handed out already on November 19th)

As a tentative timetable, we will dedicate some two weeks for each chapter in your textbook – which you must please ALWAYS BRING WITH YOU to our weekly reunions, because we need to work with the picture materials contained in the book! Time will also be allotted for viewing selected visual media presentations.

Good luck!