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Humanities in America (Honors)  
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**Course Description:** In this class we’ll celebrate the artistic heritage of the United States. “American culture” is too often dismissed as kitsch and commercial -- television and advertising, essentially -- which unfairly overlooks so much, starting with the early contributions made by American writers of the 19th century, as well as the stirring rhetoric of the Founding Fathers themselves, America’s own Enlightenment thinkers. Furthermore, the 20th Century is rightly called the American Century not only for the United States’ role, for good or bad, in political developments but also for its enormous contributions to the world’s artistic heritage in music, dance, painting, photography, architecture, and especially cinema. This semester we’ll explore the two centuries of American art through various readings, films, images, and musical excerpts.

**E-mail / Internet:** Announcements, program changes, and class materials are distributed via e-mail or are placed on Blackboard for you to download. Therefore, it is necessary -- as necessary as your buying the textbook -- that you have a current e-mail address and check it at least once a week. I’ll go over materials in class as well, of course, but you may well miss them or receive them late if you’re not routinely on-line. It’s not a bad idea to check for last-minute announcements before coming to class. Finally, don’t be concerned if you don’t always receive a reply to any e-mail that you may send to me; I simply might deem it worth a collective response rather than an individual one, as the issue you’ve raised might concern the whole class.

**Workload:** Two exams (midterm and final). One in-class presentation (occurring weekly throughout the semester; details announced later). Two reflection papers on select films and/or literary works. Pop quizzes, sometimes as a means to take attendance. Typically, exams are short answer / fill in the blank, with some lecture slides to identify. One make-up session for a missed exam is offered the last week of term, with different content and method, so think carefully if you decide to miss the regularly scheduled exam. If you feel unable to watch a film that I’m presenting to the class, let me know and, providing you have a valid case, I’ll arrange an alternate assignment for you, though this may require some legwork on your part.

**Advice on the readings:** Start the novels early; they’re great books but not ones you can expect to get through in a day.

**Grades:** 25% of term grade for each exam, 10% for the presentation, 40% total for the papers and the quizzes. I offer some extra credit, but not too much, as I prefer that all work is available to all people -- such as a film screened in the classroom. However, if an interesting activity comes along that I think you’ll profit by, I’ll let you know; those who participate can write a short paper to earn an additional grade step on an exam or paper.
Papers and any other outside work: These must be typed, double-spaced, with 12-pt. type and 1” margins. I don’t accept e-mailed copies except as a temporary place-holder to show that you’ve done the assignment; you must still turn in a printed copy by the next class session. I do not typically accept late work, but if I allow it in a particular case, expect to lose a full letter grade for each day’s delay.

Cheating & plagiarism: Don’t do it. Cribbing answers or using other people’s ideas without giving them proper credit is both unethical and a serious breach of school rules. Depending on the severity of the offense, you’ll certainly fail the assignment in question; you may also fail the course. In that case, the Dean will have more than a few sharp words for you as well. The same goes for disrupting an exam in any way.

Attendance: I take attendance regularly, by various means. Besides a standard roll call, I give random pop quizzes at the very start of class, which will confirm your being present while being an easy way to get credit if you arrive on time, as they can’t be made up. I also sometimes send around a sign-in sheet. At term’s end, I’ll give one additional grade step (again, usually worth 5 %) to those who’ve routinely signed in and are passing the class. One unexcused absence is the official limit; excused absences must be documented.

Obviously, you can only do better by attending regularly and taking good notes. Anything touched upon in my lectures or in the reading/viewing/listening is fair game for an exam question. Before each exam, I’ll briefly go over essential material. For all those reasons, you’re encouraged to exchange e-mails and phone numbers with a few peers; you’ll have a way to catch up if you miss class, and -- who knows? -- you may make a few new friends.

Study guides: These are luxuries that no instructor is obliged to provide. If you want to do well on exams, you need to pay attention, take good notes, read the material, and review diligently all that accumulated knowledge. Right before a test I provide a brief list of points that you should know -- but that is a gift to you and is delivered when convenient for me. It is certainly not an entitlement, nor is reviewing it a substitute for the kind of hard work expected of college students. I do not post my lecture notes on Blackboard.

Class conduct: Your comportment should be a balance of common sense and common courtesy. While in class, you’re expected to conduct yourselves as professionals. Informed questions and polite attention make for good participation; eating lunch, talking to your neighbor, checking e-mail, or chatting on the phone distracts both your colleagues and myself and will not be tolerated. Mobiles off! No laptops, texting, or phone use once class is in session; doing so will result in your being obliged to leave and take an absence for that day. Late arrivals or those who have to leave early, please sit at the back and enter or exit quietly. Drinks and snacks are fine, but no full-scale meals -- if you spill anything, clean it up!

Student health, etc. Please let me know as early as possible if you need special accommodation for taking notes or exams, or have any other private concerns.
Please read the following statements, which explain standard university policies on GE classes such as ours.

FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING

Foundations of Learning courses follow and build upon Communication and Critical Thinking courses and are offered by individual departments and interdisciplinary areas in the Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Humanities and Fine Arts. Foundations of Learning courses in the Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning are divided into four categories: 1. Physical Sciences, 2. Life Sciences, 3. Laboratory, and 4. Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning. Those in the Humanities and Fine Arts are divided into five categories: 1. Literature, 2. Art, Classics, Dance, Drama, Humanities, and Music, 3. History, 4. Philosophy and Religious Studies, and 5. Foreign Language. Foundations of Learning courses introduce students to the basic concepts, theories, and approaches offered by disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas of study. They provide the foundation to understand and approach problems in the academy, and in local and global real-world environments. Consistent with class size and learning goals, they cultivate skills in reading, writing, communication, computation, information-gathering, and use of technology. Where appropriate, courses intended as preparation for a major may also be designated as Foundations courses. Only lower division courses are designated as Foundations of Learning courses.

HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS

The Humanities and Fine Arts encompass works of the imagination, such as art, literature, film, drama, dance, and music, and related scholarship. Students better understand human problems, responsibilities, and possibilities in changing historical contexts and diverse cultures, and in relation to the natural environment. Students acquire new languages and familiarize themselves with related cultures. They gain the ability to recognize and assess various aesthetic principles, belief systems, and constructions of identity. Students acquire capacities for reflection, critique, communication, cultural understanding, creativity, and problem solving in an increasingly globalized world.

GOALS FOR GE COURSES IN THE HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS

• Goal 1: Analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments.
• Goal 2: Develop a familiarity with various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures.
• Goal 3: Argue from multiple perspectives about issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance.
• Goal 4: Demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.
Course plan by week. All assignments subject to change (modification / addition / deletion) if we get behind or find new topics to consider.

(1-19) **Course introductions – what are the Humanities?**

(1-26) **Colonial and Young America.** American State Papers, R.W. Emerson, “Concord Hymn.”


(2-9) Robert Hayden, “Middle Passage” (hand-out).

(2-16) Film: *Amistad* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1997).

(2-23) **Late 19th Century & the War Between the States:**
Excerpt: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (hand-out).


(3-9) **Exam #1.** Film: *The General* (dir. Buster Keaton, 1926). Student presentations assigned.

(3-16) **Theater:** Henry James, *The Heiress* (Goetz adaptation, dir. William Wyler, 1949).
“Civil War” reflection due. Student presentations.


(3-30) **Spring Break.**


(4-13) **New directions in art:** Jackson Pollack, Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat.
(4-20) **Photography: landscapes, nudes, & photo-journalism.** Adams, Stieglitz, Lange.

**Dance: From Fred & Ginger to Twyla Tharp.** Video: *Slaughter on 10th Avenue.*


(5-4) **Television: a new medium:** Excerpts from *I Love Lucy, The Outer Limits, Star Trek, The Night Stalker, Twin Peaks.* Exam review. Student presentations.

(5-11) **Dead Day.**

(5-18) **Finals Week.** Bring pen; review exam guidelines beforehand. Be sure to confirm all your final exams times, which will often differ from your regular class times.