Dear Instructor:

Welcome to Humanities 1100: Introduction to the Humanities. The course you will be teaching enrolls over 1500 students per semester at various sites around the valley, and includes almost 600 high school concurrent enrollment students. It is a significant course for the college and a vital introduction for students to the ways of college thinking and to the ways we see ourselves as human beings in the larger world.

In accordance with the requirements adopted by the Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate to have uniformity across sections of a course, we have also finalized the curriculum that everyone teaching the Humanities 1100 course will be required to adopt. That curriculum consists of a thematic organization and is based on extensive reading, viewing, and discussion of primary materials. The course will be discussion based, with students expected to participate actively in the classroom and develop their critical thinking skills. Rather than this being an appreciation of the arts course, it will be a course that looks at the myriad ways that practitioners of the humanities (broadly conceived in terms of discipline) have attempted to answer some of the fundamental questions about what it means to be human. These questions include things like: What is the origin of life? What do our answers to this question tell us about ourselves and our culture? What does religion offer? How does one lead a religious life? What is Nature and what is man’s relation to it? Why do we fight wars? What does war do to culture and humanity? How do culture influence the way we think about war? What does it mean to be in love? How does culture impact our conceptions of love? Why do cultures have different ideas about how to demonstrate love? What is the position of women or racial and ethnic minorities in society? Where do ideals of beauty and attractiveness come from? What does freedom mean? What responsibilities do we have to our fellow human beings and to ourselves? What is death and how do we think about what it means to die?

The course as conceived looks at these questions from the perspectives of the different media used in the humanities: poetry, novels, plays, dance, philosophy, painting, sculpture, music, etc. For instance, if poets and politicians tell us that war is a glorious and noble undertaking, what is the point of view of artists, or novelists, or philosophers, or film-makers? How do each of these groups present their views, in what context, to what effect on our perceptions? Using creative products of world cultures ranging from painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature, to drama, film, television, and music, we show the students how the contexts and techniques available affect their production, message, and reception. Instead of covering each medium (painting, sculpture, music, literature, film, T.V.) in separate sections, giving students the vocabulary and development of technique within that medium, we discuss topics or themes, demonstrating to students how the various arts have depicted the same themes across centuries and cultures. So we are not looking so much at historical development of techniques within the mediums, although that is an important element of the course, but at how those mediums are used to express IDEAS.

Our approach is analytical and comparative. During the first week we teach students the basic goals of critical thinking and then work to develop those skills during the remaining weeks. We do this in part by asking students to select similarities and differences and by asking them to speculate why such similarities and differences might exist. But there are a number of additional dimensions to the art of critical thinking which we use in our study of the works of art in this class. Some of these include: thinking independently; developing insight into egocentricity or socio-centricity; exercising fair-mindedness (respecting all viewpoints & opinions); exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts; developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment; refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications; comparing analogous situations -- transferring insights to new contexts; developing one's perspective -- creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories; clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs; clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases; developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards; evaluating the credibility of sources of information; and questioning deeply -- raising and pursuing root or significant questions.

We have put together a collection of materials arranged thematically, with thematic introductions, entitled It Begins With Our Questions: A Thematic Introduction to the Humanities (Hayden McNeil: 2013). This is the required textbook for the course.

The themes included in the book are: Critical Thinking and Interpreting Skills in the Humanities; Romantic and Passionate Love; Freedom, Responsibility, & Justice; Identity, Privilege, & Inequalities; Responses to Nature; The Experience of War; Sacredness, Spirituality, & Morality; and Death. Within the thematic arrangements we have taken pains to provide enough material for instructors to be able to focus on different types of ideas, mediums, etc. We do not expect all of the material within a theme to be covered. Rather, we expect each instructor to be able to
choose from the broad range available to provide a comprehensive look at the theme under study. Additionally, we were also careful to include material in each theme that could conceivably be used either to link to a previously studied theme or to be used in conjunction with other themes (for example: Antigone might be used in either Identity or Freedom or Thoreau’s Walden in either Responses to Nature or Freedom & Responsibility). Because of the sheer amount of information already in the text that can provide years of use, we ask that no additional books be required for the students. We allow additional small readings with approval from the lead instructor.

In addition to the textbook and thematic organization, all classes must adhere to the following learning outcomes, minimum organization, assignment and assessment requirements:

1. Students will:
   demonstrate knowledge of the humanistic tradition of questioning and determining the meaning(s) of human experience.
   demonstrate recognition of the central role values play in the processes of perceiving and understanding the meaning(s) of human experience.
   investigate a variety of humanities texts -- poems, plays, stories, speeches, paintings, musical compositions, sculptures, etc. -- and demonstrate improved facility in close reading, comprehension, interpretation, and argument.

2. Students will:
   demonstrate the ability to think independently, analytically, critically, and creatively about the products of culture and the information they contain
   demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own and others’ work
   demonstrate the ability to evaluate the effects of geography, economics, politics, religion, philosophy and/or science on the values of a culture and the stylistic features of the arts; includes ability to analyze similarities and differences among values of diverse cultures, eras, and artistic products.
   demonstrate the ability to make connections across disciplines.

3. Students will:
   demonstrate the ability to relate another’s culture to their own
   demonstrate evidence of questioning their attitudes and beliefs because of working with and learning from the diversity of different answers to major questions about the human condition that exist as a result of the myriad of cultures, ideas, and artistic products in the world and the United States.
   provide evidence of experience in civic engagement activities and describe what they have learned about themselves as it relates to a reinforced and clarified sense of civic identity and commitment to public action.
   be able to demonstrate potential consequences of proposed critical interpretations for policy-making in both historical context and in the present, and to make an argument for how humanistic inquiry can be used to improve life in communities and societies.

4. Students will communicate effectively about SLOs 1-3.

5. Students will use computer hardware and software to complete course assignments and to examine a range of resources for class preparation, and to post a signature assignment to their ePortfolio.

Special Instructions regarding the course which every instructor must adhere to:
Keeping in mind that each of the items below must be directed toward achieving the Student Learning Outcomes outline above, we would request that instructors adhere to the following:
1. Instructors must use the required textbook and website for assignments. No written materials outside of what is provided are permitted without advance permission from the lead instructor.
2. All instructors must read the “methods” document which outlines the rationale for the course and explains the pedagogy to be utilized.
3. All instructors must: assign the text introduction to their students; highlight the connections among disciplines on p. xxvii of the text; assign "How to Read in This Course", "A Method for Reading, Writing, and thinking Critically," and "Culturally Variable Ways of Seeing"; and must assign the thematic introductions.

4. All instructors must assign one (1) of two (2) Required Themes: "Sacredness, Spirituality, & Morality"; or "Identity, Privilege, and Inequalities"

5. All instructors must complete 3 Optional themes from among the remaining six (for a total of 4 themes per semester). The syllabus and assignments must show the use of auditory and visual materials that supplement, enrich, and reflect upon the written texts. Such materials should include, but are not limited to, the course website, the CDs of materials provided to instructors, and so forth. Instructors should make every effort to review and utilize the instructional materials provided by the Humanities department, including handouts, slideshows, the course website, and texts.

6. Instructors should construct courses to provide students opportunities to explore "the Big Questions" (those focused on the primary and universal conditions of human existence) and how others have answered these questions. Constantly keeping those questions in mind, reflecting upon them consciously in class, referring to them regularly, tying every aspect of the course to those questions, and employing critical thinking skills regarding them will ensure that the course is meeting the SLCC Humanities Department curriculum requirements. Overloading the course with details and expecting students to memorize such details is contrary to the goals of the course and should be kept strictly to a minimum.

7. Instructors need to be thoroughly prepared. This means being thoroughly familiar with the content you are presenting and not have errors of fact concerning the ideas and individuals studied in the course, and it means demonstrating critical thinking skills to students by constantly questioning your own assumptions and biases.

8. All students must engage in 2 cultural activities consisting of a required museum visit and a required international film. Students must use critical thinking assessments/critiques of these activities that are provided on the course website.

9. To document progress toward achieving the learning outcomes all students should complete a reflective journal focused on the materials of the course. A reflection journal helps students reflect on their own thinking process, which in turn helps them to reflect on the thinking process behind cultural works.

[Studies show that for new information to make sense to students, it must be related or connected to other things they already know. People construct knowledge, using previous knowledge as a foundation. At the same time, that previous knowledge often has to be reworked and remodeled to fit new ideas. That is, people must often challenge their preconceived notions or concepts.]

10. All instructors must focus on the development of students’ critical thinking capacities and all students must complete some form of written assessments of their learning. Students should be encouraged to mark up the books (in some fashion) and take ownership of them, which can also demonstrate critical thinking skills.

11. Instruction should be heavily based on classroom interaction and discussion that promotes critical and in-depth thinking about the materials. Student participation in discussions should account for a substantial portion of the student’s grade. Grading of discussions should follow a rubric that requires the development of critical thinking skills on the part of students.

12. All instructors will require students to undertake a project during the semester that will be designed specifically to fulfill the outcome of civic engagement outlined above in the SLOs (although the project may also fulfill other SLOs). The project should:
   a. be tied back to the themes and specific works from the class
   b. outline a civic engagement process
   c. contain a pre- and post-reflection element
   and should preferably:
   d. utilize new technology media effectively to engage students and help them progress in their learning process (examples of new media include pod and vodcasts, Screenr videos, blogs, TED-type webpages, social-media sites, etc.)
   e. teach skills for engaging in their community through either political or non-political processes

13. Online and hybrid courses will meet all of the same requirements listed above with the exception that for online courses students will not be required to (but may) complete a museum visit for their cultural activity. Discussions in the online environment may fulfill both the class discussion and reflective journal elements of the course and will be conducted in such a way that they demonstrate improved facility in comprehension, interpretation, and argument. Online discussions should be evaluated to ensure that posts to the discussion are consciously reflective, meaning the author reflects on his/her own thinking, on what other classmates are writing, and/or on what the class reading has to say. Effective posts should indicate a thoughtful comment that is well-organized, rather than something that reads like it was dashed off quickly. Effective posts should make substantial points, bring in new evidence or lines of argument, or pose interesting questions, all of which stimulate others to respond with serious comments of their own. They should not be an excuse to proselytize or harangue, or seem like a lecture. They should be backed with evidence drawn from the course materials.
14. All instructors are required to assign a "signature assignment" for students to upload to their ePortfolio, and to assign a reflective component in accordance with department and college policies.

15. At the end of each semester all instructors must provide to the Humanities Department assessment data that reflects student progress toward achieving the Learning Outcomes.

We have developed a course website with additional materials for student and instructor use and we will continue to update that website as necessary. You can access the website at:

http://rwdacad01.slcc.edu/academics/dept/huma/1100/

Scroll to the bottom of the website to access instructor materials.

This course is not particularly easy to teach, especially given the minimal “apparatus” in the text (although there are introductions, headnotes, and some discussion questions). It requires that all instructors research author/artist backgrounds, contexts, histories, etc. This will help you better integrate the host of materials available for the course and will also enrich students’ understanding of some of the major questions raised throughout the semester.

The course, despite the ostensible look of the text, should not devolve into a purely “literature” course by any stretch of the imagination. You all should be covering the relationship between painting, sculpture, music, drama, philosophy, film, writing, poetry, etc. throughout the semester. There are interesting and instructive ways to do that using this thematic arrangement.

With the book I provide everyone a copy of CDs which contain documents, background information on various artists/poets/writers, sound files, links to NPR programs relevant to the themes, extensive powerpoint slide shows of artwork grouped thematically, etc. I hope and expect everyone will incorporate some elements of these in your classes. One of the goals of this reorganization was to bring the class into the 21st century and make use of the technologies available to us to make the course more interesting to students. To that end students should be exposed to as many different types of media as possible, including the Internet, CDs, Videos, slides, sound files, and the like.

If you need help figuring out how to include these elements in your classes (or even how to use the CD), please contact me and I’ll be happy to walk you through things and provide tips that I’ve found to work well. Since this should be and is going to be an integral part of the course, it will weigh into the matrix which determines priority for instructor slots in the future. We also have an extensive library of additional resources available for checkout through the Center for Languages in the Technology Building, Room 418.

Let me know if you have any questions or need any help planning.

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