

**The University of Oklahoma
College of Liberal Studies
Humanities of the Ancient World
LSTD 3233 803**

August 23, 30, September 6, 13, 20, 27, October 4, 11, 2007

5:30-9:30 pm

**Oklahoma City Community College
Room 3K3 (Main Bldg)**

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Course Description

A general survey to help you understand the relevance of the humanities, this course is a guided study exploring a vast period of time and activity from prehistory through the Middle Ages. We will cover a broad range of topics and, at the same time, engage in deeper explorations of areas of particular value to you as a student and as a human being.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you will:

1. Gain a historical framework for understanding humanities from ancient times through the Middle Ages.
2. Be able to accomplish a more in-depth analysis of humanities across cultures and eras.
3. Understand how the various areas within the humanities interrelate.
4. Have an opportunity to formulate and express your own ideas about how social values are experienced through the humanities.

Textbooks and Instructional Materials

The following texts have been selected to provide you with a broad view of this complex subject. In addition to reading about art, music, architecture, history, and philosophy, you will be reading two major works of literature, works which I hope will stay with you for many years to come.

Required texts for this course

1. Dennis J. Sporre, *The Creative Impulse: An Introduction to the Arts*, 7th edition. New York: Prentice-Hall, 2005. 0131936808

2. *Gilgamesh: A New English Version* by Stephen Mitchell. New York: Free Press, 2006. 0743261690 (There are other versions available, but you will find this paperback edition one of the most readable.)
3. Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1984. 0-14-044425-4 (You will read only *Oedipus the King* from this book.)
4. Creation stories from other cultures. This includes the King James Version of the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2. (These stories will be available on the course D2L site in advance of the first class. Print these out for our first class session.)

For additional help with your writing, the Purdue University Writing Center web site is outstanding. Find this web site at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

The Four-Part Structure of the Guided Self-Study

This course will meet eight Thursday evenings in the Fall 2007 semester. There are four units of study to be completed for the course.

Class—what you can expect

Yes, you do have a life outside the classroom. On Thursdays, before our class meetings, you probably have worked a full day. Because of this, you may be tired and not particularly excited about exploring literary, religious, historical, artistic, musical, or philosophical ideas and texts. I hope to enliven these class sessions with movies, recordings, slides, and other media. We will have some discussion or other response to these media presentations—and I will present some information via lecture. We may take a field trip to a local museum or exhibition. We of course will take breaks throughout the evening. At the end of each unit, you will take a quiz. The goal is to cover this extremely broad topic as effectively as possible—and to have a good time while we're doing it!

Writing—and Its Importance

I regard writing as important and, as course time allows, will present concepts and approaches to help you improve your writing. In terms of writing for this class, you will write two 2-3-page response papers (see details below). I also propose that you keep a journal for this class to record your reaction to *Gilgamesh's* impossible journey, Oedipus' dilemma, or something you've noticed about medieval cathedrals or a tenet of Islam. This journal is not required and will not be collected or viewed by me. But it would be a way to practice your writing skills. You improve your writing by writing.

The point: After this class, you may never again be called upon to write about literature or any other art form. That's not the point. In life your opinion will be sought. You will write letters or email messages or give presentations that convey thoughts, both deep and shallow. You will expect your audience(s) to understand clearly what you are writing/talking about. I know of no better way to learn how to organize your thoughts and communicate than to learn and practice the fine art of writing. In

business and in personal interactions with others, you will draw upon this skill for the rest of your life—and it will make a difference in the *quality* of your life.

August 23-September 6, 2007—Part I: Beginnings

We begin with the beginnings of civilization and some well known and not so well known creation “accounts”—not to mention the famous flood story. Very early in civilization’s history, humankind demonstrated many preoccupations and concerns. We will look at the earliest known epic story, *Gilgamesh*. Of particular interest to us will be the epic journey and the role of the hero.

Part I Reading (to be read before class)

Creation stories from other cultures, including the creation account from Genesis (texts provided)

The Epic of Gilgamesh (You need only read the epic itself, pp. 67-199, though you might find the Introduction helpful to your understanding.)

The Creative Impulse readings:

Getting Started and Putting the Arts in Context

Chapter One—The Ancient World

September 13-20, 2007—Part II: Ancient Greece

In these sessions, we will explore the world of the ancient Greeks. Sophocles’ tragic tale of Oedipus will help clarify the preoccupations, concerns, stresses, and joys of these people. How are the people of this era unlike and like us? Most important, what can we possibly learn from such a far removed world?

Part II Reading (to be read before class)

Oedipus the King (Again, you need only read the one play, pp. 155-251, but the Introduction might aid in your understanding of this classic story.)

The Creative Impulse readings:

Chapter Two: The Aegean and Archaic Greece

Chapter Three: Greek Classicism and Hellenism

September 27, 2007—Part III: The Early Middle Ages and the Rise of Islam

The Middle Ages is a convenient term for an extremely broad period of time (roughly 500-1500 CE). We will shine a light on this so-called “Dark Age,” when the church redirected everyone’s attention away from the world and toward eternity. Also, we will give some attention to the activities of an individual who played a critical role in the creation and rise of Islam: Mohammed.

Part III Reading (to be read before class)

The Creative Impulse readings:

Chapter Six: Byzantium and Islam

Chapter Seven: The Early Middle Ages

October 4, 2007—Part IV: The High and Late Middle Ages

The Gothic cathedral, the Crusades, the works of Chaucer and Dante, and the concept of chivalry often characterize the High Middle Ages. Still, the focus is very much on the transient nature of earthly life. With the Late Middle Ages, we get the rise of secularism and increased interest in the arts and, significantly, particular artists. Very simply, this is the age that ushers in preoccupations that we still have today.

Part IV Reading (to be read before class)

The Creative Impulse readings:

Chapter Eight: The High Middle Ages

Response Papers

You will write two 2-3-page response papers for this course. For each paper, choose ONE of the topics below.

Topics for Response Paper #1 (This paper is due: September 6.)

1. Like many heroic quests, Gilgamesh's search for eternal life mirrors other journeys. In literature, these include *The Odyssey*, *Moby-Dick*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *On the Road*, *Life of Pi*, and many others. In film, we find many examples (dramatic and comic): *The Wizard of Oz*; *High Noon*; *The Matrix*; *O, Brother, Where Art Thou?*; *Sideways*; *Finding Nemo*; *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, and more. Compare Gilgamesh's journey with that of any other hero from literature or film. (Please do not use any of the *Star Wars* films as we will likely discuss those in class.) How are these two heroes' quests similar? How are they different? What do the quests seem to say about the cultures that produced them?
2. Virtually all ancient art (especially before the classical Greeks) is integral to its religious beliefs. Select ONE work of art from the first three chapters of Sporre to illustrate this point. Describe the work and clarify how it relates to religious beliefs and practices. How does this art compare with art produced today (you may refer to art produced during the twentieth century; Sporre deals with this art in chapters 16 and 17)?
3. One major theme of Sophocles' play *Oedipus the King* is personal responsibility. Discuss this theme in relation to one of the main characters in the play: Oedipus, Jocasta, or Creon. Given that most of the calamities in the play have already occurred in the past, what could this character have done to take responsibility? How does the role of responsibility in *Oedipus the King*

compare with what we find in our society today? Be specific and use examples and quotations from the play to illustrate your points.

Topics for Response Paper #2 (This paper is due: September 20.)

1. Discuss how Gothic cathedrals reveal in monumental form the religious ideals of the Middle Ages. Focus on ONE work of sculpture or stained glass from one cathedral and examine its details. How does this artwork reveal Christian ideology? How does this artwork serve as a teaching tool? In addition to Sporre, you may find it helpful to research online the cathedral you selected to help in your discussion.
2. Today, we often see in the media negative aspects of Islam (e.g., Islamic fundamentalists engaged in terrorism, treatment of women in some Islamic countries), but in reality Muslims have made tremendous contributions to culture. Using Sporre (you may use other sources, including online, if you choose), discuss ONE of these contributions. How is civilization better for this innovation?
3. The setting of Ingmar Bergman's classic film *The Seventh Seal* (1957) is the plague-ridden homeland of a knight returning from the crusades. After viewing this film (available from Netflix and from Blockbuster and other video rental stores), deal with the following: What religious questions are raised in this film? How are these questions similar to or different from concerns of people in the Middle Ages, as outlined by Sporre? Do not summarize the film. Instead, focus on ONE key issue or question raised by Bergman in this film.

Your response papers should be typewritten, double-spaced, properly punctuated, and correctly spelled. Draw your own conclusions and observations and don't just recite what someone else has written about your topic. I am looking for thoughtfulness, originality, clarity, and general writing effectiveness. These papers should be opportunities to react thoughtfully to material we have read, looked at, or listened to. No library research is necessary for these papers, though you may choose to do some Internet research or you may need to view a film. Other than Internet, any citations (use *Chicago Manual of Style*, MLA, or APA style guidelines as you prefer but be consistent) should be to the works we use in class. Also, make sure your paper has a VERY SPECIFIC TITLE.

An Unfortunately Necessary Note on Plagiarism

It is unpleasant to deal with this topic because many students automatically assume that if I bring it up I do not trust them. That is not the case. I assume every student in my class is a trustworthy person of integrity. We will devote some time to properly citing information in papers from other sources. My policy is, simply, any paper discovered to be bought or which includes unattributed material from others will automatically receive an "F."

Group Presentation

In the last class meeting, you and your team are to create an original mythology. That is, you will make up a creation story, devise heroes and/or heroines, gods and/or goddesses, and embellish this mythology however you choose. You may not use existing mythologies. I want you to think outside the box and have fun. Keep in mind that this 30-minute presentation should include/address the following at a minimum:

- **Creation**—how did the universe begin, according to your mythology?
- **Heroes/Heroines**—who are some of the heroes and heroines in your mythological world? What did they do? In what ways were they heroic?
- **Gods/Goddesses**—who are some of the gods and goddesses in your mythological world? Remember, you are creating this out of nothing, so use your imaginations!
- **Relevance**—how is your mythology relevant to our lives in 2007? (VERY IMPORTANT)
- **Context**—what does your mythology say about the culture/civilization out of which it emerged? (This may require the most thought of all.) How did people live, what did they believe, what hopes did they hold, etc.? (VERY IMPORTANT)

The fairest approach is to break down your topic and divide the work among your team. Every member of the team should participate in this project!

The presentation may include music, pictures, etc.—anything to make it more interesting. PowerPoint presentations are fine. I have had groups create game shows, tests, movies, ancient storytelling reenactments, epic poems, songs, and other activities to teach the class. Essentially, your group becomes the instructor for your 30-minute time slot. Your grade will be based on preparation, creativity, originality, thoughtfulness, information conveyed, how you address the relevance/context issues, and use of the time.

Course Deadlines

9/6/07 Response paper #1(2-3 pages) due

9/20/07 Response paper #2 (2-3 pages) due

10/11/07 30-minute group presentation delivered in class

(Note: deadlines may need to be revised in the event that I attend the annual conference of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs in October.)

Grading

You will receive a letter grade for this class. Grading is based on:

1. four quizzes (40% of grade)
2. two response papers (30%)
3. one group presentation (30%)

I do not award credit simply for being in class. I assume, barring some emergency, that you will attend class. It is not my intention or wish to “flunk” students. However, grades are required to measure your course progress, and I will issue grades based on my assessment of your course accomplishments. I do not give “A”s for effort.

You may appeal to me any grade you feel is unfair or undeserved. A proper grade appeal will come in the form of a typewritten request. In this request, you must explain why you believe the grade is an inaccurate reflection of your abilities and should be changed. Grade appeals via phone or in person will not be considered. After receiving your grade appeal, I will make a judgment objectively based on the merits of your case. If I decline to change the grade, your next step will be to initiate a formal grade appeal through the Dean of the College.

Team Cooperation

There is only one graded team assignment in this course: the group mythmaking project. Everyone in your group should be in accord about the topic choice. All should be involved in researching/preparing for/presenting the topic. As mentioned above, I am open to all forms of presentations—PowerPoint, overheads, videos, etc.—as long as your technologies are compatible with those available on the OCCC campus.

Part of the purpose of this team assignment is to create opportunities for you to learn and sharpen your team building and team participation skills. Also, this is an opportunity for you to build confidence in your writing and presentation skills.

It is not my place or purpose to oversee your team’s cooperation and development. If you believe a team member is not performing assigned tasks, it is your responsibility as a team, not mine, to deal with that situation. If your team experience is unfruitful and frustrating for you, and if you feel your grade suffered accordingly, you may do additional work in order to boost your grade. However, since this program revolves around teamwork, you should make every effort to be a cooperative and productive member of your team.

Academic Misconduct:

Any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Cheating: the use of unauthorized materials, methods, or information in any academic exercise, including improper collaboration;
- (b) Plagiarism: the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own, including:
 - (1) direct quotation without both attribution and indication that the material is being directly quoted, e.g. quotation marks;
 - (2) paraphrase without attribution;
 - (3) paraphrase with or without attribution where the wording of the original remains substantially intact and is represented as the author's own;

- (4) expression in one's own words, but without attribution, of ideas, arguments, lines of reasoning, facts, processes, or other products of the intellect where such material is learned from the work of another and is not part of the general fund of common academic knowledge;
- (c) Fabrication: the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise;
 - (d) Fraud: the falsification, forgery, or misrepresentation of academic work, including the resubmission of work performed for one class for credit in another class without the informed permission of the second instructor; or the falsification, forgery or misrepresentation of other academic records or documents, including admissions materials and transcripts; or the communication of false or misleading statements to obtain academic advantage or to avoid academic penalty;
 - (e) Destruction, misappropriation or unauthorized possession of University property or the property of another;
 - (f) Bribery or intimidation;
 - (g) Assisting others in any act proscribed by this Code; or
 - (h) Attempting to engage in such acts.

Penalties are listed in the Academic Code. For further information on academic misconduct please refer to the following link: <http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity/>

Disability Issues: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent her or him from fully demonstrating his or her academic abilities should contact Frank Rodriquez (405-325-1061) as soon as possible to discuss the accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities. For further information on disability issues please refer to the following link: <http://www.dsa.ou.edu/ods/index.html>

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I was born and raised in Oklahoma City. I received a B.A. (English) from Oklahoma City University, an M.A. (English) from the University of Iowa, and an M.F.A. (writing) from Bowling Green State University. Currently, I am Director of Development for University Outreach, which includes the Colleges of Continuing Education and Liberal Studies. I have written six published children's books, edited books on residential continuing education and adult degree programs, and am managing editor of *Confluence: The Journal of Graduate Liberal Studies*. In addition to Liberal Studies courses, I have taught English at Oklahoma City University and Bowling Green State University, workshops about writing and marketing, and film classes for OU.

Each college instructor you encounter has unique strengths and interests. My own background falls in literature rather than other areas of the humanities, though I have

some experience with art, film, religion, and history. If you are curious about my preferences, the following list of literary, historical, musical, and filmed works have particular meaning for me.

Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*
Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*
Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Goldberg Variations*
James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*
Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators*
Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*
Joseph Campbell (with Bill Moyers), *The Power of Myth*
Aaron Copland, "Fanfare for the Common Man"
E. L. Doctorow, *Lives of the Poets*
Stuart Dybek, *I Sailed with Magellan*
Peter Gabriel, *Passion*
Werner Herzog (dir.), *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*
Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*
Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Rear Window*
Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*
Jerzy Kosinski, *Steps*
Malcolm X (with Alex Haley), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
Joyce Carol Oates, many of her short stories
Georgia O'Keefe, any of her New Mexico paintings
Roman Polanski (dir.), *Chinatown*
Popular music by Steely Dan, Rolling Stones, Talking Heads, and Frank Sinatra
Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*
Philip Roth, *The Breast*
Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*
Ben Shahn, many of his paintings of social commentary
Orson Welles (dir.), *Touch of Evil*

For me, the great mystery of life—and its humor—is aptly captured in this remark from author Saul Bellow:

There are many skeptical, rebellious, or simply nervous writers all around us, who, having existed a full twenty or thirty years in this universe, denounce or reject life because it fails to meet their standards as philosophical intellectuals. It seems to me that they can't know enough about it for confident denial. The mystery is too great. So when they knock at the door of mystery with the knuckles of cognition it is quite right that the door should open and some mysterious power should squirt them in the eye.