

## HUMANITIES 220

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday, 1-3

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

According to the Geneseo Bulletin, HUMN 220 is “a search for moral, social, and political alternatives and meaning embodied in the institutions, culture, and literature of Western Civilization from the beginnings to 1600.” This is an abstract way of saying that a lot of old books deal with universal questions and problems that are still relevant today. For example, over the course of the last four years our nation has been struggling with questions about how much force we should use, both at home and abroad, in order to protect our national security. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, writers including Thucydides and Euripides confronted the same kinds of questions. Without exception, all of the old books that we read this semester speak to similar contemporary issues.

By the end of the semester, student work should demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify and express the main points made by the thinkers that we study.
- Compare and contrast the conclusions that thinkers from different time periods and/or places reach regarding similar questions about the human condition.
- Critique the ethical, moral or intellectual conclusions that different thinkers have reached on these kinds of questions.
- Explain how these thinkers were responding to and shaping the historical circumstances in which they lived.
- Explain how these thinkers are relevant to problems and controversies we are encountering in the year 2006.
- Present critical ideas in discussion and writing in a manner that is clear, concise, and conformable to standard English usage.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Grade Breakdown**

Exams (3 exams: exams 1 and 2 worth 15% each; exam 3 worth 20%):	50%
Papers (2 papers worth 20% each):	40%
Class Participation/Group Leader:	10%

#### **Exams (Exams 1 and 2 worth 15% each, exam 3 worth 20%)**

Exams are scheduled for 28 September, 2 November, and 19 December (3:30-6:30 pm). All exams will consist of 4-5 in-class essays dealing with the readings and course material. The first two exams are not cumulative. The third exam will have a cumulative take home essay (questions will be handed out on 7 December and the essay will be due during the exam session).

### **Papers (2 papers worth 20% each)**

Students will be asked to write two 5 page papers on topics assigned by the instructor (usually I give three choices and you write on the one that interests you most). These will be due on 19 October and 7 December. All papers will require a critical engagement with the assigned readings and some outside research. Questions will be handed out at least two weeks in advance of the due date and students are encouraged to review drafts with the instructor.

### **Class Participation/Group Work (10%)**

Regular attendance in class is expected and habitual absenteeism will dramatically affect this portion of the grade. I understand that not everyone is comfortable in discussions, however it is my hope that all students will take an active part and will feel safe in expressing their opinion in this setting. Consistent lack of participation in discussions or chronic attendance problems will negatively affect your class participation grade very quickly. Students who attend class regularly but do not participate in discussions cannot expect higher than a C grade for this component of the course.

At the beginning of the semester, students will be divided into discussion groups of approximately 5 people. On days devoted to "group work" on the course schedule, one student from each group will take responsibility for leading his or her group's discussion of the assigned readings. Study guides with suggested questions will be handed out in advance and group leaders will prepare written notes on approximately 8-10 of these questions as preparation. Written preparation work will receive a check plus (equivalent to an A grade), check (equivalent to a low B), check minus (equivalent to a low C), or zero (skipped session). These marks will be factored with other components of class participation when this part of the grade is calculated.

### **OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Readings**

Students are required to read all assigned texts before class. Generally, this process should also allow for time to critically reflect on what the authors are trying to say. In other words, it is exceedingly difficult to make sense of Dante ten minutes before class starts. Please plan ahead and keep up with the syllabus readings.

One of the aims of the Geneseo Humanities sequence is to help students understand how old books often have something significant to say about the world that we live in. This aim is weakened, however, if you are uninformed about the world around us. For this reason, all students are required to read the top two or three articles on the front page of a major national news source (CNN, the Washington Post and the New York Times offer free access) before every class session.

#### **Due Dates and Extensions**

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late exams and papers will be deducted 10% per day, including weekends. Papers that are more than one week late will be given an automatic zero.

Requests for extensions on major assignments should be made at least a week in advance of the due date (except in the case of a dire illness or other emergency) and must be accompanied by some concrete evidence that you have been working on the assignment. I will not grant extensions for work that is incomplete due to poor planning.

## **Paper Drafts**

I will be happy to look at drafts of the papers and discuss ideas/progress with you at any point in the semester. However, please be considerate of my schedule if you want feedback on a rough draft. It takes several days for me to read and comment on drafts, and revisions may take several days on your part. Drafts submitted less than a week before the due date will be reviewed at my convenience and discretion.

## **Email and Outboxes**

Everyone will automatically be enrolled in a HUMN 220 listserv. Major announcements for this class (e.g. schedule changes, class cancellations, etc.) will be made through this list. Be sure to check your geneseo.edu account on a regular basis.

I store copies of all class handouts and presentations in a HUMN 220 folder in my network outbox. If you miss class, please check the outbox before you ask me/email me for copies of handouts (but please do email me if you can't find a document in the outbox – I sometimes forget to post things). Learn how to use this incredibly useful resource at [www.geneseo.edu/~cit/quickguides/pdf/boxes.pdf](http://www.geneseo.edu/~cit/quickguides/pdf/boxes.pdf).

Email is a terrible format for communication certain kinds of information, and is particularly unsuited to giving feedback on written work. Unfortunately, some students increasingly rely on email as their main line of communication with faculty. If you want to discuss your work, please try to make an appointment to see me or drop by during open office hours. If you cannot find time to speak with me personally, you may email me. However, my response will not be instantaneous (especially over the weekends) and may not be as detailed as you would like.

## **Classroom Conduct and Class Participation Standards**

Geneseo is a liberal arts college. The curriculum assumes that students will show up to class having prepared and reflected upon the course materials and will be ready to discuss them. To get an A in class participation, you need to be present, you need to demonstrate that you've read and thought about the readings, you need to be willing raise relevant points during class discussions, and you need to be an active and critical participant.

Since this is a discussion-based class, you are expected to attend class regularly. I do not take attendance during lecture classes, but will take attendance on Group Work days. Excessive absenteeism will negatively affect your class participation grade. If a long-term absence arises as a result of illness, injury, family emergency, etc., please contact me as soon as possible.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined in the [SUNY-Geneseo Undergraduate Bulletin](#) as the “deliberate representation of someone else's words or ideas as one's own or the deliberate arrangement of someone else's material(s) as one's own. Any one of the following constitutes plagiarism: (A) Direct quotation without appropriate punctuation and citation of source; (B) Paraphrase of expression or thought without proper attribution; (C) Dependence upon a source for a plan, organization or argument without appropriate citation.” (<http://handbook.geneseo.edu/3>)

If you commit an act of academic dishonesty on any assignment in one of my classes, you will automatically fail the course and a letter will be placed in your academic file at the dean's office.

## **Accessibility**

I will be happy to make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should discuss needed accommodations with myself

and the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin) as early as possible in the semester.

**READINGS** (available at Sundance)

The Bible (any version is ok)  
Euripides, Medea and Other Plays (Penguin)  
Thucydides, On Justice, Power, and Human Nature (Hackett)  
Plato, Republic (Hackett)  
Virgil, The Aeneid (Bantam)  
Augustine, Confessions (Penguin)  
Dante, Inferno (Penguin)  
Pizan, Book of the City of Ladies (Penguin)  
Shakespeare, Hamlet (Signet preferred, but any version that indicates acts and scenes is ok)

<b>Tuesday, 29 August</b>	Introductions
<b>Thursday, 31 August</b>	Why Are We Here? The Teaching of Western Humanities <u>Read:</u> Genesis, chapters 1-26
<b>Tuesday, 5 September</b>	Ethics and the Law in the Old Testament <u>Read:</u> Exodus, chapters 19-24, Book of Jonah
<b>Thursday, 7 September</b>	Interpreting Good and Evil in the Old Testament <u>Read:</u> Book of Job, chapters 1-14 and chapters 32-42
<b>Tuesday, 12 September</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on the Old Testament
<b>Thursday, 14 September</b>	Confrontations with "Evil": Euripides's <u>Medea</u> <u>Read:</u> Medea (all)
<b>Tuesday, 19 September</b>	Crisis in the Greek World: The Peloponnesian War <u>Read:</u> Thucydides, introduction and pages 1-36
<b>Thursday, 21 September</b>	Democracy and War, Part I <u>Read:</u> Thucydides, pages 37-110
<b>Tuesday, 26 September</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on Medea and Thucydides <u>Read:</u> Thucydides, pages 111-160
<b>Thursday, 28 September</b>	<b>EXAM 1</b>
<b>Tuesday, 3 October</b>	Greek Philosophy and Plato <u>Read:</u> Plato, books I-IV
<b>Thursday, 5 October</b>	Plato on Reality <u>Read:</u> Plato, books V-VIII
<b>Tuesday, 10 October</b>	<b>Fall Break, no class</b>

<b>Thursday, 12 October</b>	Empire Building, Heroes, and National Myth in Rome <u>Read:</u> Virgil, books 1-3
<b>Tuesday, 17 October</b>	Loyalty, Responsibility and Destiny in the Aeneid <u>Read:</u> Virgil, books 4-6
<b>Thursday, 19 October</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on Plato and Virgil <b>PAPER 1 DUE</b>
<b>Tuesday, 24 October</b>	New Testament Backgrounds and the Ethical Philosophy of Jesus <u>Read:</u> Gospel of Luke
<b>Thursday, 26 October</b>	The Divinity of Jesus <u>Read:</u> Gospel of John
<b>Tuesday, 31 October</b>	Christ's Message as Interpreted by Paul <u>Read:</u> Paul's Letter to the Romans and Acts, chapters 6-9
<b>Thursday, 2 November</b>	<b>EXAM 2</b>
<b>Tuesday, 7 November</b>	Good, Evil, and the Individual in Early Christian Thought <u>Read:</u> Augustine, books 1-4
<b>Thursday, 9 November</b>	Augustine's Salvation <u>Read:</u> Augustine, 5-9
<b>Tuesday, 14 November</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on New Testament and Augustine
<b>Thursday, 16 November</b>	Sin and Justice in Dante's Inferno <u>Read:</u> Dante, cantos 1-9
<b>Tuesday, 21 November</b>	Sin and Justice, part II <u>Read:</u> Dante, cantos 10-34 (with special attention to cantos 13-15, 28, and 31-34)
<b>Thursday, 23 November</b>	<b>Thanksgiving, no class</b>
<b>Tuesday, 28 November</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on Dante
<b>Thursday, 30 November</b>	Women's Voices in HUMN I <u>Read:</u> Pizan, 1-35, 57-73, 78-85, 101-110, 123-131, 150-161, 169-175, 201-208, 224-225, 235-240
<b>Tuesday, 5 December</b>	Does Hamlet fit? <u>Read:</u> Hamlet (all)
<b>Thursday, 7 December</b>	<b>Group Work</b> on Pizan and Hamlet <b>PAPER 2 DUE</b>
<b><u>FINAL EXAM SESSION</u></b> <b>Tuesday, 19 December, 3:30-6:30</b>	<b>EXAM 3</b>