San José State University  
Humanities  
Humanities 160, The Indebted Life, 01, Spring, 2017

Instructor: Jason Thomas Wozniak  
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Telephone: 408-924-1264  
Email: jason.wozniak@sjsu.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-1pm  
Class Days/Time: Thursday 4:30-7:15  
Classroom: BBC 221  
Prerequisites: Upper Division Standing

Course Description

Through interdisciplinary study this course will survey how financial debt shapes daily life on individual as well as collective levels. The ethics, aesthetics, and material realities of indebted life will be examined. Special emphasis will be placed on studying student financial debt.

Relevant Humanities Program Learning Outcomes: (see below for aligned assignments and activities)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1) frame questions and pursue answers to aesthetic, social, cultural and global problems using interdisciplinary methods.  
2) demonstrate skill in written, visual and verbal communication.  
3) identify, select, use, and cite information sources appropriately.  

Additional Course Learning Outcomes: (see below for aligned assignments and activities)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

4) articulate complex understanding of the effects of debt on individuals and society.  
5) articulate relationships between the debt economy and social, cultural, political and ideological systems.  
6) analyze the intersectional and ethical dimensions of debt on local, national, and global levels.  
7) creatively engage peers and community members in theorizing ways to address the material and emotional effects of indebted life.  
8) analyze the ways in which debt influences education policy, theory, and pedagogy.
Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

Other Readings
Please consult the weekly reading list below. PDF files of texts not listed above will be available on Canvas.

Other equipment
For the debt photo essay assignment all students will need a device to take photos with. Any type of camera is permitted.

Course Requirements and Assignments
SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of four-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf.

Short Descriptions of Course Assignments (A separate more detailed handout will be provided for each assignment)

Debt Journals (15% of grade) PLO 2; CLOs – 4-6,8
Students will be asked to write one-two page reflections on the ways that debt influences their individual lives, as well as society. The expectation for these journals is that students will apply knowledge from course texts and discussions to analyzing everyday indebted life.

Debt Interview (15% of grade) PLOs 1,2; CLO 4,7
Each student will be required to interview one community member outside of class on the topic of the indebted life. In addition to transcribing, or turning in a digital copy of their interview, students will be expected to write a two page analysis of their discussion.

Mid-Term Essay (20% of grade) PLO 2; CLOs 4-6,8
In consultation with me, students will create a question that they wish to write a 4-5 page essay on. Students will be expected to incorporate course readings and discussions into their analysis.

Debt Photo Essays (To Be Completed in Pairs) (15% of grade) PLO 2; CLOs 4-8
In line with one of the major themes of the course, the art of debt, students will be asked to artistically represent indebted life. Additionally, each paired group will briefly present their work to the class. **Note- You may decide to create another visual art form if you would like, please consult with me first.**
Final Papers/Mock Conference Presentations (25% of grade) PLOs 1-3; CLOs 4-8

Having attended the SJSU Indebted Life conference (April 20-21st), students will be asked to write a 4-5 page response paper which engages with one of the papers or workshops presented at the conference. Each student will be placed on a mock “conference panel” and will present to, and field questions from, their classmates. *Note-Conference attendance is a course requirement. Please plan ahead so that you are able to attend both days of the conference.

Class Participation (10% of grade) PLOs 1,2; CLOs 4-8

The course is designed to create a community in which all members are teachers and learners. Responsible participation from everyone in the community is required. Thus, students are expected to be on time and to attend all scheduled class sessions for the entire length of the class period. It is also important that all students be prepared to participate by doing the readings and assignments, thinking about the topics in advance, writing down comments or questions, and sharing reactions, experiences and thinking with the class.

Student participation grades will be based on the following in-class exercises.

- “Ignorant Schoolmaster” (IS) exercises: Beginning from an “axiom of equality,” I will assume that you are all capable of reading and interpreting any text without my explication, if you direct proper attention to the text. My role as a facilitator will be to help you attend to the text(s) so that you arrive at an adequate understanding of it. IS exercises will be undertaken in assigned groups of 4-5 students. During each IS exercise group members will collectively examine a particular text, or perhaps just a passage from a text, and will record their answers to three questions: “What do we see?” “How do we interpret what we see?” “What should we say about what we see?” More details to follow.

- “Horizontal Pedagogy” (HP) group discussion: At different moments in class I will ask the class as a whole to lead the day’s discussion on the assigned text(s). To do this we will practice a technique called “Horizontal Pedagogy.” In brief, this technique involves looking at a text with peers, creating “interpretative and philosophical questions” about it, and participating in a discussion based on the questions raised by other members of the class. The aim of HP work is to teach and learn in a collective manner. More details to follow.

- Exit Questions/Comments: At five different times throughout the semester I will ask each student to leave me one question or comment as they leave Seminar for the day. These will then be graded on a 1-10pt scale.

University policy F69-24 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf states, “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

Grading Policy

Each assignment and activity will have specific requirements. Generally speaking, I apply the following rules of thumb when grading student work: “A” work (90-100%) demonstrates mastery of the material, i.e., working knowledge of key information, the ability to apply and use knowledge gained in class critically. “C” work (70-79%) demonstrates an acceptable level of retention with a lower level of familiarity of key concepts and facts, and may struggle to apply or use their knowledge; there is room for improvement here, but the student is well enough along to advance to the next stage of their education. “B” (80-89%) work falls somewhere between, and can vary widely from student to student. Both “D” and “F” work have serious problems with accuracy, skills, retention, and application.
Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See University Policy F13-1 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf for more details.

Classroom Protocol

Notes on the formation of a Community of Inquiry (COI):
In Seminar we will actively be constructing and taking part in a “community of inquiry.” A COI is a group of people/students who question, read, think, perceive and feel together by closely reading texts, examining areas of knowledge, and exploring the contemporary world they are situated in. It goes without saying that respect for your fellow classmates is critical to creating a healthy COI learning atmosphere.

University Policies

General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU’s policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as the next step.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The Late Drop Policy is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

University Policy S12-7, http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf, requires students to obtain instructor’s permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”

- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

Academic integrity
Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

**Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center (AEC)](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) at http://www.sjsu.edu/aec to establish a record of their disability.

### Humanities 160 / The Indebted Life, Spring 2017, Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Art of Debt (If Tech. Allows), Watch: Segments of “Ivory Tower”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td><strong>Part I: Social and Cultural Analysis: An overview of today’s debt economy, special emphasis on student debt.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Read: Jeffrey Williams, “Student Debt and the Spirit of Indenture”</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td><strong>Part I Cont.</strong></td>
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<td>Read: <em>Demos-The Debt Divide</em></td>
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<td>Watch (in class) John Oliver on the Puerto Rico Debt crisis: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt-mpuR_QHQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt-mpuR_QHQ</a></td>
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<td><strong>First Debt Journal Entry Due (1-2 page reflection on individual debt)</strong></td>
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<td>*10pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/16</td>
<td><strong>Part II: Interdisciplinary Study of Different Modalities of Debt</strong></td>
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<td>Read: David Graeber, <em>Debt: The First 5,000 Years</em>, Chs. 1-3</td>
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|   |   | **Second Debt Journal Entry Due (1-2 page reflection on debt and society)**  
|   |   | *15pts.  |
| 5 | 2/23 | **Part II Cont.**  
|   |   | Read: *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, Chs. 5 & 12  
|   |   | Read: Jacques LeGoff, *Your Money or Your Life*, Ch. 3  |
| 6 | 3/2 | **Part III: Critical Debt Theory and Philosophy**  
|   |   | Read: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* Book II  
|   |   | **Third Debt Journal Entry Due (1-2 page reflection on individual debt)**  
|   |   | *20pts  
|   |   | **Part IV: The Art of Debt**  
|   |   | • Film viewing (In Class): “99 Homes”  |
| 7 | 3/9 | **Part III Cont.**  
|   |   | • Guest Lecture: Prof. John Aubrey-Douglass, UC Berkeley  
|   |   | Read: Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Forward-Chapter 2  
|   |   | **Fourth Debt Journal Entry Due (1-2 page reflection on debt and society)**  
|   |   | *25pts  
| 8 | 3/16 | **Mid-Term Essay Due (See separate handout for assignment details)**  
|   |   | **No Class (I’m attending a conference) Mid-terms must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59pm.**  
|   |   | **Part IV: The Art of Debt**  
|   |   | Read: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* Chs. 1-7  |
| 9 | 3/23 | **Part III Cont.**  
|   |   | Read: Saidiya Hartman, “Fashioning Obligation: Indebted Servitude and the Fetters of Slavery,” From * Scenes of Subjection*  
|   |   | **Part IV: The Art of Debt**  
|   |   | • Discuss *The Grapes of Wrath* Chs.1-7  
|   |   | • Debt Painting and Sculpture Viewings in Class  
|   |   | **Debt Interview Due**  |
| 10 | 3/30 | **SPRING BREAK**  
|   |   | **Part IV: The Art of Debt**  
|   |   | Read: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* Chs. 8-20  |
| 11 | 4/6 | **Part III Cont.**  
<p>|   |   | Discuss Lazzarato reading from 3/9.  |</p>
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| 12   | 4/13 | **Part III Cont.**  
Read: “The Pedagogy of Debt”  
- Round 2 (If necessary) Debt Photo Essay and in class presentations due (See handout for assignment details, assignment done in pairs) |
| 13   | 4/20 | **SJSU Indebted Life Conference April 20-21*.  
*April 20th Hammer Theater 2-7pm  
Attendance Required*  
*April 21st SJSU Campus 11:30-4pm* |
| 14   | 4/27 | **Part V: What is to be Done?**  
Read: *The Bonds of Debt: Borrowing Against the Common Good*, Chs. 6-Conclusion  
Read: Debt Jubilee, Selected Readings from *Tikkun’s* Winter 2015 Issue TBD  
Read: Lazzarato, Last Chapter from *Governing by Debt* |
| 15   | 5/4  | **Part V Cont.**  
Guest Workshop: SJSU Financial Literacy Team  
| 16   | 5/11 | **Student Conference Presentation of Papers (Note this class may run 30min-1hr overtime)**  
Read: *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*, Finish Book  
Have finished *The Grapes of Wrath* |
| Final Exam | 5/18 | **Final Papers Due 11:59pm uploaded on Canvas** |