

Tips to Be Successful in Humanities Honors

Humanities 1A/B offers an integrated, interdisciplinary introduction to ideas, events and arts of Western culture and the world that have endured and influenced people for centuries. We look at the development of Western culture from a variety of perspectives. Our aim is to develop an understanding of the origins of the values, institutions and attitudes that have contributed to producing the complex and diverse culture we share today.

During the first semester, we begin with the arts, literature and history of parts of Asia and Africa by examining the early cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, India, and China. Since these cultures provide the groundwork for the development of later civilizations not only on parts of Asia and Africa, but also on the European continent, we see how the movement from east and south to the Aegean and Mediterranean regions stimulates the growth of the Greek city-states and later the Roman Empire.

The second semester explores aspects of the further diversification of civilization in parts of Asia, Africa and Europe. Interrelationships among the religions of the Word (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) as well as Renaissance Humanism are considered from historical, artistic and literary perspectives. The rise of new social and political institutions is explained in terms of cultural and value shifts during the era traditionally called the Middle Ages. The movements of people and shifts of their cultural boundaries motivate changes once again, this time by re-thinking the ideas and arts that generated it; the Renaissance concludes this semester.

Goals:

This course will aim to accomplish the following:

- Each student will have the opportunity to consider some of the significant ideas and other creations of humankind.
- Students will be able to become familiar with the milieu, which yielded these important works.
- Students will be able to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of women and diverse cultural and religious groups in the movement of civilizations. Also, an aesthetic and poetic awareness regarding the many means of communication will be cultivated.
- Students will be encouraged to express their understanding, experiences and views in not only written discourse but also in group discussions and speeches.

Learning Objectives:

This course will be a success if:

- Students can develop arguments for their positions and express them effectively in written and spoken discourse.
- Students can analyze and critically consider the works and ideas they will encounter.

- Students can express attitudes and emotions in response to the materials to which they will be exposed.
- Students will recognize the significance of what they read, see and hear, and be able to recognize connections among people and times.
- Faculty can assist and encourage students in the above-mentioned endeavors.
- Faculty can learn from student needs and responses so as to be able to provide richer, more effective educational experiences.

2. General Education requirements fulfilled

Since Humanities 1A/B comprise only half of a four-semester sequence, partial fulfillment of the following G.E. core areas will be met when a student has successfully completed two semesters. G.E. credit is given after the successful completion of all four semesters, since all of the GE areas are continually developed throughout the four semesters. At that time, students will earn G.E. credit for the following core areas: Oral Communication (A1), Written Communication (A2 & C3), Critical Thinking (A3), Arts & Letters (C1 & C2), Social Sciences (D2 & D3), American Institutions and California Government (US1, US2 & US3). Since this is a lower division course, there are no prerequisites and no prior background is assumed. However, enrollment in the course is by invitation only, and is based upon a high school GPA of 3.0 or better and scores that determine qualification for English 1A.

3. Student and Faculty responsibilities

This course requires a significant amount of reading. Students are asked to read each scheduled assignment prior to coming to class. This means that the readings listed by date on the reading assignment schedule are to be read before the day those readings are listed. This also means that students are to strive to understand the readings as well, not merely go through the motions of poring over pages. Since the readings are often challenging, they should also be a source of questions to keep in mind while listening to lecture, and to ask about during seminar. Expect to spend 4 to 6 hours per week in doing only the readings for this course. It is not possible to work effectively in this course if one were to rely on the lectures and class discussions alone.

A variety of writing assignments will be assigned for this course, and they will differ among instructors, but all instructors will assign topics that meet the writing requirements for the various core areas. Please see section III 3 in this syllabus for additional information about the specific kinds of written assignments you will be asked to accomplish. Students will also be asked to complete a lecture mid term examination, and final examinations for both the lecture portion of the class as well as the seminar portion. Students will also be required to complete one speech each semester. The specific guidelines for each are to be found in the Assignments section of Professor Rostankowski's website for each semester.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with University policy as described in the SJSU Catalog. Sometimes students are unclear about the meaning of plagiarism, and so it is useful to go over the requirements. For all written assignments, one must always give credit to the sources one uses in preparing one's work. If you read a work, but have no direct quotes from it in your paper, you must include the source in a bibliography. If you read a work and re-state ideas that come from the reading in your paper, you must provide a footnote to indicate the source of the restated ideas. If you use a direct quotation from something you read, you must also provide a footnote. Bibliographies and footnotes may include not only books, but also any and all relevant media (e.g. information from journals or magazines, the Internet, lectures, television or radio, etc.). The rule always is: give credit to the sources you use; don't attempt to take credit for the work of another.

Re-using papers that have been written for other courses is also not permitted. One may, however, in consultation with one's instructor, develop and expand earlier work in new ways. Be sure to speak with your seminar instructor about his or her requirements in such circumstances.

Study groups and other collaborative means to master material for this course are encouraged. Copying is, however, always unacceptable, as is the use of unauthorized materials during examinations and quizzes.

It is important to attend both lectures and seminars regularly, and to arrive on time, and stay until the conclusion of the class. Here are some reasons why. Lectures and seminars develop and explain the readings and the topics listed on your schedule. Sometimes a reading is relevant to a lecture topic only as an example or is perhaps independent of it. Both the topic and the reading need to be understood, and one needs to attend both lecture and seminar to accomplish this. One's questions may be answered and one's views may be voiced in seminar. Class time may include important announcements for the course, e.g. date or assignment changes. Participation is a legitimate criterion to include in evaluating a student's course work. It isn't possible to participate if one is absent.

Instructors must make themselves available to provide explanation and insight into the course readings, lecture topics, and into important aspects of the activities and times addressed by or presumed in the unfolding of the course. Both lectures and seminars are intended to make opportunities for optimal understanding available.

4. Assessment

In order to assure the most effective learning experience for you the student, your professor is required to assess the ways you have mastered the materials comprising the various components of the course. Assessment means nothing more than gathering information about your learning experience. Some of this information is used to assign grades to your individual work, and some is used to suggest ways that

the course can become more beneficial in meeting your learning needs. The university requires that professors explain and justify their assessment methods, and so to enable your best understanding of what will be asked of you, we offer the following information.

Every semester your progress in the General Education core areas covered will be assessed in three ways. At the beginning of each semester, you will be given diagnostic exercises in specified areas. That is, you will be asked to respond to some questions to determine what you understand about certain areas to be covered in the course before you have actually learned the specific course material. The preliminary diagnostic assessment is ungraded, and functions as a baseline from which your progress can be seen. Throughout each semester, your work (paper assignments, in-class exercises and mid term examination) will be evaluated and used as a way of assisting the development of the course in an ongoing manner. This is called formative assessment, and it is also a source of information for you as to your own awareness of your learning development regarding the subject areas and skills covered. Lastly, the end-of-semester final examinations, the English 1A and Second Year essay examinations and the California Government examination all comprise what is called the summative assessment. These concluding assessments demonstrate your level of accomplishment of the subject areas covered as General Education requirements.

At the conclusion of every semester, your course grade will be computed and recorded. The specific valuations of each of your work assignments will be spelled out in the individual seminar greensheets distributed by your seminar instructor. The aim is always to maximize your possibilities for success by providing you with feedback, and by learning from you what will most effectively assist you in learning

5. Texts needed – See Lecture Syllabus for required readings.
- II. List of Assignments – See Seminar Syllabus for written assignments.
 1. Reading Assignments – See Lecture Syllabus for reading assignments.
 2. Speeches – See *Handbook for Public Speaking* by S. Hinerman in the Course Documents section of Professor Rostankowski's website for HUM 1A this year.

Speeches:

In Humanities 1A/B, one speech each semester will be required. The first speech, during Humanities 1A, serves as both diagnostic and formative assessments. A first draft, complete full sentence outline is initially submitted, then a five-minute argumentative speech based upon the corrected outline is presented in class. Topics for this speech may include the institution of slavery, attitudes toward conquered peoples, cultural and religious oppression, etc. Since neither the draft nor the presentation is

graded (although both are corrected and commented upon), this work serves the initial assessment purposes. During 1B, an interpretive literary or philosophical speech is given. Again with a complete full sentence outline, and a five-minute class presentation, this work must specifically focus on topics derived from course lectures and readings. Topics may include philosophical accounts of the nature of reality, the development of Medieval logic, Romance literature and poetry, etc.

In preparation for both speeches, students will be provided with evaluation guidelines to help prepare and assess work. Explanations of the speech requirements will be described in the [Assignments](#) section of Professor Rostankowski's website for each semester, as well as in seminar discussions.

Written Assignments:

III. Appendix

1. How to Read the Assigned Readings

The texts and images we read in this course have been around for a long time, and sometimes, because of that distance in time between us and the creators of the works, we need to approach what we read and see with more attention than we would otherwise use in encountering current popular material.

Your reading assignment table is useful in giving some direction to your reading before you begin. The brief descriptions you find there should help you to know what to look for when you read; they help you to read with a purpose in mind. If you have some idea of what you are reading to learn, you will be able to read more effectively and directedly. If you have no idea why you are asked to read a particular work it is more likely that you will miss the point, or become confused.

Another part of reading for effectiveness and involvement is to ask you to read critically, that is, think about what concerns the author or artist might have in creating his/her work: what is the point of view? What values are expressed? What is presumed by the author/artist? All these considerations affect the intended message, and being aware of them is significant to our understanding of it.

Purchase your books and interact with them: underline important passages, put asterisks next to topics that you want to know more about, or that you might wish to write about, put question marks next to passages you do not understand, write notes in the margins to remind yourself of the importance, the attitude or the insight of particular sections. Alternatively, you could use post it notes in your books to take note of all these things, or you might read with your notebook or laptop at hand, and write down all of your information and insights. However you choose to accomplish it, to be successful in your work, you must interact with your books.

If you come across a word you do not understand, use a dictionary to look it up. This is one of the greatest sources of confusion and misunderstanding; you will not be able to understand your reading assignments if you miss the meanings of the words that comprise them. If the difficulty in understanding extends beyond the meanings of the words used to their deeper significance in a context, mark the passage with a question mark, and be sure to ask about it in class.

Read on a schedule if at all possible, that is, be sure to set aside a couple of hours every other day at a certain time to do the reading for this course. Think of it as your job, and don't procrastinate. If you can develop a habit of doing your reading at a certain time regularly, it makes accomplishing the work much more likely, and much easier. As a great scholar once said: "Routine is a great antidote to procrastination."

Sometimes the best way to understand difficult reading is to read with a friend. You may wish to arrange a study group (two or three people only – anything more is a party) to talk about what you have read, or even to read the particularly difficult bits aloud and then talk about them. Often, one person will understand different parts of the same reading more effectively than another, and working together can accomplish a richer understanding for all involved. Your study group will be useful also when it comes time to review for the exams, but more about them later.

2. How to Participate in Seminar Discussions.

As an Individual:

- Be sure you have done the reading critically and with a purpose. Think about your ideas relating especially to the topics mentioned in your reading assignment table.
- Jot down questions you may have formed while reading, or during lecture. This will help you to keep important ideas well focused.
- If you have formed an opinion, offer it for consideration. We gain insight by pursuing what is to be understood. Be sure to be ready to support your opinion with arguments and examples.

As a Group:

- Always be respectful of one another. If you disagree with someone's ideas, you may politely say so; address the idea, not the person who expressed it.
- Sometimes some topics are uncomfortable to talk about and listen to. If such topics come up, or if you are aware of certain issues that you might feel sensitive about discussing, bring them up privately with your instructor, and you can strategize about their treatment. Always be aware that everyone is likely to be sensitive about something, and so be kind in your treatment of others.

3. How to Write the Required Essays and Other Assignments for the Course

The Everyday Writer is your first guide in preparing well-constructed essays. Be sure to have it at hand whenever you write. It provides information on the basic essay formats, grammatical information, directions for citing sources etc. Each assignment will include a set of specific guidelines and instructions as well as topic information; be sure to pay close attention to what might be included in these details.

Remember, writing is a process made up of many steps. Do not expect to be able to skip any of them and still accomplish your writing well.

- In order to be able to write, you must first have read your assignments and other material relevant to the particular sort of writing activity.
- The choice of a topic, and then the formulation of a thesis when appropriate requires reflection and careful formulation. Think carefully about what you wish to write, and what you wish to express. For those papers requiring thesis statements, remember that a thesis statement must make a claim that is not obvious, but which can be shown to be reasonable by means of the arguments and evidence you provide in writing the paper. The more carefully you develop your topic and thesis statement, the easier it will be for you to organize your work. You will also be more effective in accomplishing the aims of your paper, because you have formulated them specifically.
- An outline should help you to progress your aim in a specific, directed manner; think of your outline as the “map” for your essay.
- Sometimes in actually writing a paper it is easiest to write the body, then the conclusion, and go back to the beginning and write the introduction last, or at least rewrite the introduction after you have completed the paper. That way, you are sure your entire project is well directed and consistently on track.
- Lastly, edit your work carefully. Be sure to check spelling, grammar, and all the mechanics of writing. Read the paper out loud to catch any awkward sentences, and reformulate them. Remove any unnecessary or repetitive material.

4. How to Prepare for and Take Course Examinations

All examinations for this sequence of courses will be essay format, either short or long essay. To prepare for the examinations, first and foremost, you must do the readings and come to lecture and seminar. You must also carefully think about the material treated in all of these contexts. Your lecture outlines serve well as a source of review, and should direct your study of lecture material. Your reading notes, etc. will assist you in reflecting on the texts. Studying with a small group regularly can

also be helpful. Most importantly, strive to remember content and understand and recognize connections.

5. How to Approach and Understand the Integration of Course Materials

In many ways, the Honors Humanities sequence provides a rare opportunity to engage in an integrated exploration of important events, ideas and creations of human cultures. The interrelatedness of various fields of study as they come into play in real human experience is the basis for the course concept. This requires, however, that you will find yourself learning and using various methodologies as they are appropriate to the many facets of the course. To this end, you will learn the skills of deductive reasoning, scientific methodology, art and literary criticism, and methods of historiography to name a few. In seminar, fundamental aspects of these many skills will be explained and applied. Keep in mind that different skills are needed for different areas of study, and it is useful to remind yourself of which skills are to be used for the different areas of work you will be asked to accomplish. Your seminar instructor will provide guidance in both interpretation and application.

6. Help

When you need help in any way, be sure to ask for it. It is part of your instructor's job description to help you to come up with strategies for accomplishing the course readings and requirements. It is also your job to carry out all that is described and explained in this document. Always keep in mind the fact that the work of the course is doable, and with the appropriate strategies and strength of will you too will be successful.