

HON 171: The Human Event
Sample Syllabus



“Gods of the Modern World” by José Clemente Orozco

Taught by:
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Synopsis:

The Human Event is an intensive, interdisciplinary seminar focusing on key social and intellectual currents in the development of humanity in its diversity. Students examine human thought and imagination from various perspectives, including philosophy, history, literature, religion, science, and art. The readings in this class are all drawn from primary texts, and explore such topics as the relationship between the individual and society, the role of divinity in shaping human action, and the nature of our ethical obligations to the self and others. The coursework emphasizes critical thinking, discussion, and argumentative writing.

Course objectives:

- To improve the student's ability to reason critically and communicate clearly.
- To cultivate the student's ability to engage in intellectual discourse through reading, writing, and discussion.
- To broaden the student's historical and cultural awareness and understanding.
- To deepen awareness of the diversity of human societies and cultures.
- To instill intellectual breadth and academic discipline in preparation for more advanced study.

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Ethics and Multiculturalism

The Barrett community is committed to upholding values of academic, professional and personal honesty of the highest order. We believe that ethical and respectful behavior is one of the most important measures of the worth of an individual and, as such, the overall integrity of our community as a whole.

Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University, is committed to creating a multicultural learning environment, which is broadly defined as a place where human cultural diversity is valued and respected. Barrett courses integrate multicultural and diversity issues in ways that are designed to enhance students' honors experience and promote learning goals. We hope that our students will contribute their unique perspectives to this effort by respecting others' identities and personal life histories and by considering and raising issues related to multiculturalism and diversity as appropriate to individual course content.

Important: Some of the assigned texts contain adult content, such as sexuality, coarse language and violence. If this is an issue for you, you must come speak with me privately during the first week of class. I will not assign alternative readings, but I will talk to you about topics and content, strategies for reading, and suggest other sections of HON 171, if necessary.

Readings

All of our readings will be posted to Canvas. Please check the site (go to <https://my.asu.edu> and find our class site under "Courses") frequently for readings, focus questions, online discussion, announcements, etc.

As you read, you must (as in: you ought to, though you are not always required to) keep a reading journal, where you take note of the thesis (where applicable), themes, interesting quotes, and/or responses to the focus questions. In addition to the focus questions posted on Canvas, ask yourself the following questions while reading:

- What questions is the author asking?
- What assumptions is the author making?
- What controversial claims does the author make, and what are the possible objections?
- What interesting (non-obvious, original, thought-provoking) question does the author make and why is it interesting?
- What conclusions does the author draw, and what are the implications of those conclusions?

Asking yourself these questions forces you to take a stance of curiosity toward the reading, and will help you prepare thoughtful responses to our texts. **You should be able to answer these questions for each text before you come to class.**

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Sample Schedule of Readings

WEEK 1

MON Introduction to The Human Event
**Introduction and Statement of Learning Goals due by
11:59pm**
WED Ptahhotep, Maxims of Good Discourse

Unit 1: Ancient Greece

WEEK 2

MON Sophocles, *Antigone*
WED Euripides, *Medea*

WEEK 3

MON Labor Day. No class.
WED Plato, *The Republic* (Book 7)

WEEK 4

MON Plato, *The Republic* (Books 3 and 5)
WED Poems by Sappho

Unit 2: Faith and Spirituality

WEEK 5

MON *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and *First Letter to Timothy* (Christian
scripture)
WED **Writing workshop #1**

WEEK 6

MON Bhagavad Gita
Introduction by Barbara Stoller Miller
WED Confucius, *Analects*
FRI **Paper #1 due by 11:59pm**

WEEK 7

MON Augustine, *Confessions*
WED Avicenna (Ibn Sina), *The Beginning of the Story*

Unit 3: Art and World Literature

WEEK 8

MON Fall Break. No class.
WED Sonagan, *Pillow Book*

WEEK 9

MON *The Thousand and One Nights*
WED Poetry by Rumi

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WEEK 10

MON Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* -- General Prologue and
Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
WED Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*

WEEK 11

MON **Writing Workshop #2**
WED Vasari, Giorgio. "Leon Battista Alberti" and "Leonardo
DaVinci" from *The Lives of Artists*

Unit 4: Justice, Power and Politics

WEEK 12

MON Columbus, *The Four Voyages*, Sepulveda *Democratizes Alter*,
and Las Casas, *The Destruction of the Indies*
WED Montaigne, "Of Cannibals"
FRI **Paper #2 due by 11:59pm**

WEEK 13

MON Machiavelli, *The Prince*
WED Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (Acts 1-2)

WEEK 14

MON Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (Acts 3-4)
WED **Writing Workshop #3**

WEEK 15

MON Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (Act 5)
WED Last day of class

The final paper will be due during exam week (exact date TBD). You will submit it online.

Course Structure and Expectations

This course is a reading-intensive seminar; our class meetings will be organized around in-depth discussions of primary source material. Students are expected to come to class ready to discuss the readings due each day and will be asked to complete a brief reading quiz at the start of each class. Plan/expect to spend at least three hours outside of class reading, rereading, annotating, and preparing for each class meeting. Participation constitutes a substantial part of the course grade (30%); students' in-class contributions to the discussion are the basis of the evaluation. I recognize that it seems odd to demand participation, and yet, this class will not function without your engagement. Some of the texts are very challenging; our class is a place for you to take (intellectual) risks, to ask questions, to share insights and respond to one another seriously and generously.

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Laptops and tablets are welcome in the classroom for reading, note-taking and other reference purposes. You must always bring a copy of the day's readings to class either in hard copy format or electronically; failure to do so will result in a null participation grade for that class meeting. You may not use a cell phone in class for any purpose, including to access course readings.

Together we will determine what counts as meaningful discussion and develop a participation rubric, but this class demands respectful engagement with one another and with the ideas presented throughout the course. The readings interrogate a wide range of sensitive and controversial social issues and problems. I encourage open and substantive dialogue based in your lived experiences, but we must always privilege professional decorum and respectful dialogue. Please note that our discussions will always be grounded in and organized around the course texts.

The following is an example of the kind of participation criteria used in a Human Event class:

A: The student arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. Comments reveal that the student has read carefully and frequently reference specific parts of the text(s); this student occasionally initiates the discussion without waiting for the instructor to do so. This student does not, however, try to dominate the class, but listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as to the instructor's questions.

B: The student participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. It is clear that the student has done the assigned reading. This student pays attention to the comments of the other students.

C: The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, and is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. Sometimes unprepared, this student appears to lack interest in the ideas of other members of the class.

D or F: The student in this grade range seldom, if ever, participates and/or is disruptive to the flow of conversation. A student will also fall in this grade range if they does not have the correct text or any text at all.

Assessment:

Grading for the course is as follows:

30%: Class Participation

Your participation grade will be assessed by the quality of your in-class contributions, and your participation in in-class or online group activities. Things that will help improve your participation score include: coming to class prepared (***always do the reading!***), contributing productively and thoughtfully to the discussion at least once per class meeting, responding to your classmates' comments, asking thoughtful discussion questions, and encouraging others to participate. Things that will hurt your participation in class include: being disruptive (talking to your neighbor, texting, forgetting to put your

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mobile on silent), being unprepared, checking e-mail or online shopping, sleeping in class, being late, not bringing the text(s) to class.

15%: Reading quizzes and short writing assignments

We will have occasional reading response activities, in which I will ask you to reflect on and respond to the author's arguments or compare two readings, or short reading comprehension quizzes. These will either be assigned in advance or as an in-class writing activity.

55%: Essays

Each student will write three five to six-page papers. The papers will be worth 15, 20 and 20% respectively. Essays are an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to critically analyze the texts, to synthesize ideas and concepts, and develop insightful, original arguments. Your papers will be graded on accuracy of interpretation and understanding, quality of argument, expression, and originality.

Grading

The grading will be on a traditional scale of 100-98=A+, 97-93=A, 92-90=A-, 89-88=B+, 87-83=B, 82-80=B-, 79-78=C+, 77-70=C, 69-60=D, 59 and below=F.

A-level work will demonstrate mastery of the material and will go far beyond the minimum requirements of a particular assignment; in addition, there will be few or no mistakes.

B-level work will exceed the requirements of an assignment and demonstrate strong competency with the material; some mistakes, but no egregious errors.

C-level work will meet the requirements of an assignment but demonstrate only basic comprehension of the material; some mistakes and potentially a major error.

D-level work will fail to meet the requirements of an assignment and demonstrate little or no content comprehension; many mistakes and more than one major error.

F-level work will fail to meet the requirements of an assignment and have little merit as a demonstration of knowledge or ability.

Penalty for late assignments

You will be given five no questions asked, no penalty extension days to use when you wish. One day = 24 hours, therefore if you take a two day extension on a paper due on a Friday at 12pm, you will be required to submit the paper to Canvas by 12pm Sunday. Once the five days are used up, late assignments will not be accepted without appropriate medical or otherwise written documentation.

Regrading policy

If you think the grade I gave you on an assignment is wrong, you may submit it to be regraded. It must be resubmitted within one week, with a paragraph explanation as to

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why you think my assessment was incorrect and why the paper deserves a different grade. Please refer to our grading rubric when making your case and remember that grades are earned, not given.

Attendance policy

Daily attendance is required inasmuch as you must attend class to participate. Promptness reflects professional courtesy and is expected. Tardiness within the first ten minutes of class (to both in-person OR virtual meetings) results in the loss of participation points for that class.

Each student is allowed three absences (excused or unexcused), with no explanation necessary.

In case you cannot attend class in-person because of illness, quarantine, or self-isolation you may participate in this class remotely via ASU Sync. To participate remotely, simply log on to Zoom using the course Zoom Room. Please send me an email at least an hour before class so I know to turn on the zoom feature.

When attending remotely please use a quiet space and headphones for best audio and microphone quality. Please use the raise hand function when you want to speak.

Makeup work: The use of virtual technology should make it possible to attend class under most circumstances. And remember, you can miss class three times for any reason with no penalty to your grade. In some rare circumstances, participation points for the class may potentially be earned by completing a make-up assignment.

Office hours

Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of office hours! I will hold additional office hours during the two weeks prior to each essay deadline. You can come to office hours for help with the readings or an assignment, to talk about how you're doing in the class or in college, to give me a chance to know you better (and vice versa), to ask advice about your thesis project, or to just say hi.

Writing Centers

The Barrett Writing Center is staffed by Barrett students who have successfully completed both sections of The Human Event. It is located in the Study Hall, on the second floor of Honors Hall, and they also offer appointments by Zoom. They are available for individual tutoring to help you improve your writing and critical thinking skills, and I highly recommend you take advantage of their able assistance. For more information, go to <https://students.barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center>.

ASU has a significant number of in-person and online writing/tutoring centers, and there are lots of resources to help you succeed. We can all always improve our writing, so I strongly encourage you to seek help throughout the semester (and not just the weeks

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your essays are due). Please see <https://tutoring.asu.edu/writing-centers> for more information.

Plagiarism

If you submit work that is not your own, you will be fully disciplined in accordance with university policies. I have zero sympathy for violators; plagiarism is lazy and unethical, and is theft of intellectual property. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty are strictly forbidden and will result in a failing grade for the assignment, the class, and disciplinary action with the Dean. It is your responsibility to be aware of, understand, and adhere to the rules and regulations of Arizona State University and The Barrett Honors College. Please review the ASU Academic Integrity Policy and available resources here: <https://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/students>.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Accessibility, Accommodations and SAILS

Students who have particular accessibility needs should come speak with me during the first week of class to discuss course requirements and accommodations. To request an accommodation based on a medical condition, individuals should contact Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS) (students) or the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (faculty, staff, and visitors). The process of determining eligibility for accommodations and what accommodations may be available requires medical documentation and can take several days, so please do not delay in contacting the relevant office with questions.

The Human Event Writing Paper Standards

I will hand out a more detailed rubric in class to guide you as you write your essays. The elements outlined below form the basis of all Human Event argumentative papers, and therefore constitute the fundamental criteria of evaluation for all¹ Human Event classes.

1. A Human Event paper contains a clear thesis statement.

- The thesis statement makes a specific, text-based claim, not a vague or broad observation.
- The paper must stake a substantive position, one that is neither trivial nor obvious.
- Human Event papers are typically 5-7 pages, and the thesis statement should appear in the first paragraph.

2. The body of a Human Event paper defends the thesis via a progression of arguments.

- The opening of the paper provides an overall map of its direction.
- The body of the paper mirrors the introductory map, and each paragraph builds the case in logical progression.
- The paper makes an evidence-based case in support of the thesis. Accordingly, the paper also anticipates and addresses potential objections.

3. Evidence from and analysis of the primary text(s) form the backbone of the paper's defense of a thesis.

- Textual evidence constitutes the foundation of the paper's argument. The paper cites the sources of evidence.
- No outside sources are permitted.
- Analysis offers plausible explications of the texts that show how the meaning of the cited evidence helps develop the argument.

4. Human Event papers adhere to fundamental style elements.

- The paper uses proper grammar and word choice including gender neutral and inclusive language.
- The author proofreads the paper to avoid errors, wordiness, unnecessarily complex phrasings, and excessive use of passive voice.

Small and important details: These papers must be double-spaced and stapled in the upper left hand corner, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Do not include a title page, but do include your name, the course number and the date at the top of the first page. Please use a reasonable font (e.g., Times 12 pt or Garamond 12 pt or Ariel 10 pt).

Large and important details: I will be assessing your ability to develop a clearly articulated argument and gather evidence from the text in support of your claims. Quotes constitute the paper's basic evidence, and should be treated as the "objective" source material to which all readers can refer. Analysis of the primary text forms the backbone of the paper's defense of a thesis; I will be assessing your ability to "unpack"

¹ In other words, these paper standards are not specific to my class, but apply to ALL Human Event classes.

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the meaning of what you deem to be key quotes. (Note that you are not allowed to use outside sources in your essays, as this course is based on the analysis of the primary texts themselves.) A well-written term paper has a clear and compelling thesis statement that describes your argumentative position. A well-written paper flows logically, from the introduction through the body of supporting evidence to the conclusion. Finally, a well-written paper contains proper citations of the text, and uses proper grammar and spelling. Don't be sloppy with your writing – do not write the paper the night before it is due and please proofread.

Tips for Succeeding in The Human Event

A long long time ago, back in September 2012, *The New York Times* published a piece entitled “Tip Sheet: How to Succeed in College.”² Their advice, based on a broad set of experiences and feedback, gives you a sense of what you need to do to succeed at college. Here I’ve picked a few of their pieces of advice and explain how they will help you succeed in this class in particular.

“Live in the academic moment”

College is not just preparation for “the real world”; **you are living in the real world** — this is all very real and meaningful. There is inherent worth to the knowledge you’re gaining and producing, so focus on that. Don’t waste your time and energy obsessing about grades and points or complaining about the work. We all complain about the amount of work we have to do and we all procrastinate and we all worry about how well we are doing, but do not dwell in self-pity or freak out about how many points you have. That is far more stressful/stress-inducing than just doing the work. You have an opportunity to grow and learn and engage, so appreciate the process. And ask for help when you need it! That’s a sign a strength, and will help you stay focused.

“Don’t study in your room”

I (and, more importantly, former Human Event students) recommend you do not do the readings for this class in bed. The readings are too dense, too hard to do while you’re drifting off to sleep. You won’t remember them, and you can’t properly annotate and take notes while you are lying in bed.

“Get connected to campus life”

There are two ways in which connecting to other people and groups will help you in The Human Event. First, you need to find a balance between school work and extracurricular activities that works for you. As you explore and find activities that interest you, you need to learn good time management skills. Second, you need to connect with your classmates and learn to work collaboratively. Talk to them about the readings before class, discuss your paper ideas with your peers, give each other substantive comments and feedback, and help each other with editing. A more collaborative writing process will benefit all of us; it will be easier/less painful for you to write your papers, which will then be of significantly higher quality, and therefore much more enjoyable for me to read and grade.

“Always go to class”

In class, you will learn how to express your ideas and arguments clearly and engage in substantive discussion with your professor and peers. Those are valuable skills (that’s why participation is worth 30% of your final grade) and you can’t earn participation marks when you’re sleeping/eating gelato in your dorm room/refreshing Instagram.

“Take care of yourself”

Related to the previous point: You cannot attend class if you are very sick and you

² I recommend you read the entire article, they offer good advice. The full text is available at: http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/how-to-succeed-in-college/?_r=0.

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will get sick if you do not take care of yourself. If you stay up all night, eating candy and playing video games, you are not going to be particularly alert and engaged during class. See also: importance of “get[ting] connected to campus life.”

“Go to office hours”

Yes, please do! I would like to see each of you at least once this semester, both to help you with the papers and to get to know you as people.

“Be patient”

University will at times be overwhelming, and this class will be hard. Be patient with yourself -- you have never done this before. And be curious! Show up (by which I mean be physically present and intellectually engaged), perhaps with a smile, and do your work.