LIBA 202: Introduction to Liberal Arts
3 Credits
Fall 2020

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Office Hours: I will be available ONLINE once a week for 2 hours (10:00-12:00 AM E.T.) for individual and/or small group consultation. To schedule an appointment, please contact me by email with at least a 24 hour notice.

Course Description

What are the Liberal Arts? How did this curriculum of learning come about? And what are the distinctive features of the form of knowledge the Liberal Arts entail? This course will address these and other questions by surveying how the Liberal Arts as a curriculum of learning took shape in ancient Greece and evolved during the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages, the Early Renaissance and Modernity. Entirely taught online, this course will build on texts, images and videos to explore how the Greco-Roman ideal of philosophy as a “way of life” evolved into the notion of Liberal Arts education as an instrument of spiritual transformation. Through a close reading of Plato, Seneca, Boethius, Dante, Petrarch, Voltaire and Nietzsche, you will learn about the history of education and the enduring, albeit problematic, legacy of Greco-Roman culture during the age of Christianity as well as into contemporary Western society.

Required Readings

Plato, Symposium, Oxford, Penguin, 1999
Seneca, Dialogues and Letters, Oxford, Penguin, 2005
Voltaire, Candide or Optimism, Oxford, Penguin, 2005

N.B. All these books are available for online purchase on Amazon, Book Depository or other equivalent book dealers both as paperback or e-books. Other readings will be made available on MyCourses.

**Course Schedule**

The course is completely delivered online. Each week will start with a 30 minutes session on Zoom, which will be recorded and made available on MyCourses. Each module is distributed over a week and includes videos, readings, images, group discussions, quizzes and assignments that are time sensitive and need to be completed according to the schedule available on MyCourses.

**Method of Evaluation**

- **Quizzes** 25 %
- **Group Discussions** 25 %
- **Assignments** 30 %
- **Weekly Journal** 20 %

**Course Requirements**

*All the activities are time sensitive and have to be completed as indicated in the calendar. To facilitate your understanding of the mechanics of this course, the first week will include quizzes, activities and a short assignment that are not going to be graded. Although they will not affect your final grade, these activities are meant to make you accustomed to the virtual environment of the course and the weekly routine it entails.*

**Quizzes (25%)**

Starting from Week 2, each module will comprise 5 graded quizzes including multiple choice questions, fill in the bland, matching, ordering etc. Each quiz will assess your knowledge of one of the five items included in the module and of the issues addressed in the group discussion attached to each item. The quizzes will be accessible for the entire duration of the course. However, you will have only 30 minutes once you start working on a specific quiz. If you skip a quiz, it will count as 0 toward the final grade.

**Group Discussions (25%)**

Each module will comprise 5 online group discussions attached to the 5 items included in the module. For each group discussion, you are expected to address the instructor’s prompts, follow
up on at least one of the participants’ contributions and make sure to read the entire conversation as your knowledge of the context will be evaluated. Overall, your performance will be assessed according to the following rubric:

1. Average reading time: you should spend at least 45 minutes (one hour for texts and videos, 30 mins for static images) examining the item and my prompts before contributing to the group discussion. (20%)

2. Word count: overall, I expect you to contribute to each discussion with 150-250 words distributed in at least 3 contributions as detailed below. (30%)

3. Comments: your contribution should include at least three comments, and more specifically one answer to the instructor’s prompt, one reply to somebody else’s comment and one question for your group. Your comments should always be polite, pertinent to the item under examination and well informed. (50%)

Assignments (x6) (30%)

Each assignment will consist of 2 short answers (200 words each) to questions dealing with the material covered in the previous modules and one textual analysis (600 words). You will have one week to download the instructions, complete the assignments and upload it on my courses. In case you cannot make the deadline, make sure to contact me as soon as possible but remember that you can have only two extensions during the term. The assignment will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

1. Accuracy: both the questions and the analysis will test your knowledge of a number of facts examined in the module. Factual accuracy is an important component of your assignment’s success. 40%

2. Language: although this is not main the focus of this course, proper use of academic English does matter and I expect you to submit carefully edited assignments. 20%

3. Coherence and structure: the analysis needs to include an introduction, a body of the text organized in neatly structured paragraphs, and a conclusion. For helpful guidelines on how to formulate claims and structure paragraphs and essays, see W. Booth et als. The Craft of Research. 2016 (available online through the McGill library). 40%

Weekly Journal (x12) (20%)

While completing the weekly module, make sure to choose one quote, image, anecdote, or historical event that you consider particularly curious, inspiring or simply representative of the module’s topic. At the end of the week, you will write a “journal entry.” In this entry, you have to present your chosen item alongside one paragraph explaining, for example, where it comes from, when it was written or made, why you chose it, and how it contributes to understand the topic at hand. The text quoted does not contribute to the overall word count. Entries comprising
text and image are welcome, but make sure to respect the word count. Your journal will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

1. Completeness: at the end of the term, your journal should comprise 12 entries starting from, and inclusive of, week 2 of the course. 50%

2. Word count: each entry should consist of 200-250 words. 30%

3. Quality of the entry: this is a creative assignment, but it is still based on historical evidence. So, make sure that your insights and personal thoughts are based on carefully chosen and properly referenced documents. 20%

STATEMENTS

Copyright

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Recordings

Live Zoom sessions will be recorded and your image, voice and name may be disclosed to classmates. Note that by remaining in sessions that are being recorded, you are agreeing to the recording. For more information, please read the Guidelines on Remote Teaching and Learning (https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/class-disruptionסטרategiess/guidelines-remote) and the course outline for this course in myCourses.

Statement on Inclusivity

The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures endeavors to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with your instructor and the Office for Students with Disabilities (https://www.mcgill.ca/osd): 514-398-6009. Students with a documented disability should contact the OSD as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. This letter should be given to the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Please note that it might not be possible to accommodate last minute requests for accommodations.

Statement on Academic Integrity
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information). L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

**Language Policy** In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.