

McGill University
Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
Liberal Arts Program

LIBA 202: Introduction to Liberal Arts

Meetings: Monday & Wednesday 10:05-11:25pm
Location: LEA 617

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Course Description

This is an introduction to the study of the humanities in the Liberal Arts tradition. This year, the course will focus on the debate about the humanities which is taking place across North America and Europe, but also internationally.

The course is divided in three parts. The first examines key moments in the history of humanistic education from their classical Greek and Roman roots, through the Renaissance and up to their modern configuration. The second part focuses on the contemporary debate about the significance and value of the humanities in the 21st century. Finally, in the third part we will examine four films which have represented humanistic education and discuss how they intervene in the debated about its value. From time to time, we will also have guests intervening in our discussion to present their view on the role of the humanities in contemporary society.

Students are expected to participate actively in every phase of the course and to share their interests and experiences in the disciplines which they are encountering as they begin their Liberal Arts degree. The desired outcome of the course is a heightened sense of purpose and a keen sensitivity to the contribution that the humanistic tradition has made and can continue to make to modern culture and society.

Course Work

Participation in class discussion is essential. Students will be asked to discuss every work presented in class. Students' attendance record and performance in class discussion will determine their participation mark.

During the term, students will be asked to complete the following assignments (the expectations for each assignment will be discussed in class):

- (a) a **group oral presentation** of one of the texts on the syllabus (maximums of 45 minutes for the whole group, Power Point outline to be handed in). The group presentations begin on Monday, October 3, and continue on the four subsequent Mondays (October 17, 24, 31 and November 7). Each group will meet at least once with the instructor to discuss their presentation. Students will be able to sign up for the book presentations through myCourses after the end of the add-drop period (an announcement of the opening of the sign up facility will be sent to the class). The objective of this assignment is to help students work in a team and organize their ideas so that they can be communicated effectively and efficiently to an audience. The number of students in each group will depend on final enrolment but will probably not exceed 4;
- (b) **an individual response** to one of the book presentations. The responses will consist in (i) a 5 minute oral response which will include a question for the presenter(s), and (ii) a short written summary/outline of the answer to the question raised (500 wds maximum) to be handed in to the instructor the day after the book presentations. Students will be able to sign up for the response at the same time as for the presentation. The objective of this assignment is to help students develop the ability to listen carefully to the ideas presented and then ask pertinent questions and providing useful comments immediately after the presentation;
- (c) **an individual proposal and oral presentation** (8 minutes) of the final paper/project that the student intends to hand in at the end of classes. The proposal must be discussed individually with the instructor at least a week in advance of the presentation to the class. The oral presentation must be supported by a very short Power Point document which must be uploaded the day before of the oral presentation (in the “Assignment” section of myCourses) for circulation to the whole class. These oral presentations will be held in November, as indicated on the sign up facility which will be available on myCourses after the end of the add/drop period. The objective of this assignment is to develop further the students’ presentation skills and to demonstrate the ability to engage with and profit from the discussion generated by their presentations;
- (d) **due on Monday, December 5**, a final paper/project (2,500 wds maximum) based on the proposal discussed at item (c) above. The objective of this assignment is to provide students with an opportunity to develop an in-depth analysis of and argumentation about one of the key issues raised by the material discussed in class.

All assignments including **must** be handed in electronically (via MyCourses or by direct e-mail).
There is no final examination for this course.

Evaluation

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|---|-----|
| Attendance and Participation (see “Rubric” below): | 15% |
| Group Oral Presentation (Power Point format): | 15% |
| Individual Response (5 min oral + 500 wds summary/outline): | 15% |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Individual Final Paper Proposal & Oral Presented (10 min + 500 wds summary/outline) | 20% |
| Final paper/project (2,500 wds): | 35% |

Please note that students obtaining a failing grade (D, J or F) will **not** be entitled to do extra work to improve their mark.

Course Materials

Course material includes:

- (a) Edward J. Power, *A Legacy of Learning: A History of Western Education*, available on-line from McGill Library;
- (b) C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Toby Miller, *Blow up the Humanities*, Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities for?*, Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, and Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* – available through the McGill bookstore or Amazon; and
- (c) films to be watched individually by students Sam Wood, *Good-Bye Mr. Chips* (1939), Peter Weir, *The Dead Poet's Society* (1989), Mike Newell, *The Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), and Nicholas Hytner, *The History Boys* (2006) –available on-line and through a Google drive folder.

Students are advised to visit the myCourses website each Friday to verify which material will be discussed the subsequent week.

Grading Rubric for Participation (15%)

| Grade Component | Mostly not True | Partly True | Mostly True | Completely True |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Lectures participation (25%)</i> | 0-5% | 15% | 20% | 25% |
| The student engages in class, through responding to questions raised by the instructor, by asking questions, or participating in discussion points highlighted by the instructor. | | | | |
| <i>Engagement with other members of one's team (25%)</i> | 0-5% | 15% | 20% | 25% |
| The student participates in team discussions and with the instructor and during the team presentation in class. | | | | |
| <i>Response to presentations by other groups (25%)</i> | 0-5% | 15% | 20% | 25% |
| The student participates in other students' presentations, by asking questions and participating in the discussions. | | | | |
| <i>Response to presentations by guests (25%)</i> | 0-5% | 15% | 20% | 25% |
| The student participates in guests' presentations, by asking questions and participating in the discussions. | | | | |
| TOTAL | 0-20% | 60% | 80% | 100% |

McGill Policy Statements

1. 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 <http://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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity>).

2. 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.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont leur présence marque ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.