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. Coursework emphasizes critical thinking, discussion, and argumentative writing. Exploring texts from earliest recorded history to approximately 1600 C.E., HON 171 is the first half of a two-semester sequence that concludes with HON 272.

This course provides us with an opportunity to discuss some of the classic questions that humankind has wrestled with over the millennia, such as; what is our place in the Universe? Is the Universe an impersonal one? What is the relationship between the sacred and profane? How does the individual relate to the community? Is there such a thing as free-will, or are we mere puppets in a divinely scripted play? Why do bad things happen to good people? How should we act? What is the best form of love? In examining these questions by reading a selection of works from philosophers, poets and other writers, we will aim not to solve these eternal problems, but to examine what Alfred Lord Tennyson described as “the thoughts that shake [hu]mankind.”

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.
Cultivation of multi-disciplinary perspectives
Development of frameworks for self-directed learning and working within a pluralist society

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** The following works are required for purchase and are available at the ASU Bookstore or online vendors. *Only purchase these editions* - it is your duty to ensure you have the correct edition, so double check your purchase. Do not leave purchasing books too late in the semester; if the Bookstore runs out of copies, the onus is on you to obtain the correct edition before class.


Other readings will be made available on the BlackBoard site (my.asu.edu) along with background information (which will often include study questions). While these readings will be made available in electronic form, you must print them out so that you can read and annotate them easily. *No electronic devices are allowed to be used in the classroom:* not only do they distract during discussion, using them also means that you will not adequately prepare when reading the texts.

All readings are to be completed for the class in which they are to be discussed. See the Schedule of Readings below for further details. *Failure to bring a text – or use of the wrong edition – counts as an absence.*
While not required, it is highly recommended that you pick up a copy of Michael Harvey’s book *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* (2nd edition, Hackett, 2013) which will improve your writing immensely and serve you well over the next four years.

**READING TEXTS:** *The Human Event* is a reading-intensive course and you are expected to come to each class having read assignments carefully. The text is central to the class, and your discussions should always balance close-readings of the text with the wider implications of the ideas contained therein. Many of the works we shall study are philosophical in nature, and thus require close, careful, concentrated reading. Casual skimming will (a) not be helpful to you in discussing these works, (b) inhibit you from developing strong paper topics, and (c) cause you to fail any in-class quizzes or written assignments; thus your final grade will suffer. As a minimum following completing a reading, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the key question being addressed in the work you have read?
2. What are the main inferences/conclusions of the author?
3. What are the main assumptions made by the writer?
4. What are the implications if we take the author viewpoint seriously?

To aid you in your active reading, I ask that you maintain a notebook (of questions, thoughts, ideas, outlines and, as a minimum, answers to the above four questions and any study questions posted online) while doing the reading. I can ask to see this notebook at any stage during the semester and will adjust your participation score depending on the quality of your work. In addition, should I feel that the class as a whole isn’t adequately prepared for class, I reserve the right to initiate a series of unannounced quizzes or in-class written assignments which can only remove points from your participation grade.

**REQUIRED WORK:**

- Participation – 50% (20% will be distributed before Fall Break)
- Argumentative Papers – 10% + 20% = 30%
- Mini-Arguments - 20%

Please see the “Guide to the Human Event” on Blackboard for more explicit guidelines as to grading standards for both participation and written work.

**Participation** (50%): This class is a seminar; you are thus expected both to have carefully read the assigned reading and to engage in discussion during class-time. As participation is worth 50% of your final grade, it is obvious that failure to participate
will result in a grade no better than a 'D' no matter how good your written work may be. Remember, coming to class and having read the assigned reading does not count as participation; you must contribute to the discussions. You should aim for a balance between active contribution and active listening – the classroom should not be dominated by single voices. The “Guide to the Human Event” on Blackboard contains further discussion of how to participate in a seminar class.

A student exhibits excellent participation by arriving on time, thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading which demonstrate that she has analyzed the text and thought about her conclusions. Her text is open and meaningfully annotated. She is fully engaged and attentive, which includes turning to and examining textual citations made by her colleagues. She cites the text and reads specific passages to support her claims and questions. Often she initiates the discussion on an important topic, question, or passage from the text without waiting for others to do so. Her remarks do not summarize or give broad, superficial glosses of the text; they do not consist of trivial observations or subjective expressions of taste. She poses significant questions and points that demonstrate close analysis of the text, attention to details and specific features in the text. When pertinent, she also discusses how she has synthesized her ideas with other texts we’ve read. Her contributions, however, do not digress, go off on tangents, or otherwise monopolize discussion time. She listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow discussants, and responds as readily to these as she does to questions from the instructor. Importantly, she does not dominate the discussion by talking too much or being too eager to answer questions. Indeed, she makes explicit efforts to involve less talkative peers into the conversation. Her participation aims for, and if well met by her colleagues, achieves genuine dialogue on the matters at hand; thus, she contributes to our understanding of the text and challenging, thought-provoking, and insightful conversation.¹

On the other hand, actions that will harm your participation grade include, but are not limited to:

- looking intently but silently at the table/your book/your hands during discussions
- holding independent private conversations during a class discussion
- dominating discussions to the exclusion of others
- lack of civility toward others, including dismissive or hostile remarks or gestures, sleeping, allowing cell phones or other devices to disrupt the class, etc

¹ This paragraph is taken almost verbatim from my colleague, Dr. Joel Hunter.
Disruptive behavior is anything that interferes with our class and includes (but is not limited to) having private conversations during class, sleeping, doing work for other classes, reading non-course-related materials, or texting. If you engage in such behavior, you will get a verbal warning and receive an automatic absence for that day. If I have to interrupt class a second time during the semester because of your behavior, you will receive a zero for participation and thus an ‘E’ for the course.

**Participation Self-Evaluation (0%):** At the end of certain weeks - indicated on the schedule of readings below - you will be required to complete a short online reflection on your *participation* during the period since the last reflection. Just a few sentences will do. Think about what is working for you, what isn’t. What you need to improve. How the *group as a whole* is functioning. This is due by Friday at 8:00am. Failure to submit a reflection will result in an automatic and non-negotiable 1% deduction from your final grade.

**Argumentative Papers (30%):** Your papers must present a clearly organized and persuasive argument relating to the material we have read. You must develop an opinion about the work and use evidence from the text to substantiate your claims. As this course aims to have you think critically about primary sources, no material beyond our assigned readings may be utilized in your papers. Remember, you are being evaluated on the quality of your ideas, the form in which you present those ideas, and your use of textual evidence.

I am a fair grader who expects you to pay close attention to both the content and form of your written work. In general, I tend to return papers with more negative than positive comments – this does not mean that your paper was excessively “bad,” merely that given time and space constraints I am identifying the issues which I feel you can address and thus improve your future writing.

The Barrett Writing Center will be available during the semester to assist students with their papers for all their classes. Directed by BHC faculty and staffed by writing tutors who themselves have completed THE, the Center offers individual tutoring on writing papers for THE and other courses. Its goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so please take advantage of its services. See [http://barrethonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center/](http://barrethonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center/) for further details

**Mini-Arguments (20%):**

Ten times during the semester you are required to submit a short (usually one paragraph) written piece *after* we have discussed a reading. These are to be textually-
based arguments, 300 to 400 words in length, that are essentially “mini-papers” in which you take a stance on the ideas contained within the work(s) we’ve read. Use our in-class discussions and your reading journal to develop an idea. While not as formal as the argumentative papers, these give you a chance to outline arguments that may later turn into theses for those papers. Particularly useful arguments are those that consider the work in relation to others we have read. The mini-arguments are due Sunday by 10:00am but can be completed at any time after the class in which the text was discussed.

**OTHER ISSUES:**

**Attendance:** In accordance with Barrett policy, you are allowed two absences without penalty. Each subsequent absence will result in loss of 10% from your final grade. *Arriving late for class, not bringing your (printed) text to class, or bringing the wrong edition all count as an absence.*

**Office Hours:** I am available to meet with you in my office at the times listed on page 1 of this syllabus and other times by appointment. This is an opportunity for you to discuss any concerns & issues you have about the course and/or your performance or interpretive issues with the texts we read. I welcome you to come see me either singularly or in small groups of three or less. Given the available time and the number of THE students I have, it is strongly suggested that you e-mail me 24hrs beforehand to make an appointment even if you are coming to these regularly scheduled hours. If you do so, please let me know what it is you wish to discuss.

If you cannot make these hours, I encourage you to e-mail me to seek an appointment. That said, I teach four sections of THE (i.e. eight classes a week) and have other duties which include meeting with thesis students and service assignments, so it may not be possible for us to schedule a time. To ensure that students can meet with me regarding writing, I will be scheduling extra hours before the day papers are due.

**Plagiarism:** You are obviously expected not to engage in any form of plagiarism, which according to the ASU Student Code of Conduct, means representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own. Plagiarism is an act of fraud - it involves both stealing someone else’s work and lying about it afterward. Note, that for an act to count as plagiarism, the representation does not have to be intentional. See [http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity](http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity) for ASU policies regarding academic dishonesty. While I will not be enacting Dante’s punishment for fraud, as a minimum punishment, detection of plagiarism will result in failure of the course (with an XE grade) and thus expulsion from Barrett. An XE grade on your transcript denotes failure due to academic
dishonesty and will preclude you from entry into any reputable graduate or professional school. The bottom-line is, DON'T PLAGIARIZE!

**Grades:** Final numeric grades will be converted to plus/minus grades in accordance with Barrett policy. No extra credit will be offered, so don’t ask. During the semester, grades for individual assignments will be posted online. Your running total of absences will be given on the back of your name plate. Final grades will be available on myASU after finals week. The following grading scale will be used:

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=E.

**Grade Appeals:** Grades can only be contested in writing (not by e-mail) and not before the class period following return of the assignment. Please enclose all relevant material (i.e. the paper as I returned it to you) with your appeal, which should engage the comments I have made. Avoid claiming that because you worked hard, you deserve an 'A' – it is assumed that you worked hard. In case of further action, you are directed to the “Procedure on Student Academic Grievances” that is available on the Barrett website.

**Incomplete:** The grade of “I” (Incomplete) can only be given when a student, who while doing otherwise acceptable work, is unable to complete a course (i.e. in this case the final paper) because of illness or another condition beyond their control. Documentation of this is required before the assignment is due. The course withdrawal deadline is November 6th while the complete session withdrawal deadline is December 6th.

**Cell Phones:** I switch my phone off when I come to class; you should do so as well. If you’d rather be texting or surfing the Internet while class is in session, please do so elsewhere. It is insulting both to myself and your classmates.

**Food:** In accordance with ASU policy, eating will not be allowed in the classroom as it distracts others.

**E-mail:** Please ensure your ASU mailbox (or wherever it is being forwarded to) is not full. If an email gets returned to me, I will not attempt to resend the message. It is your responsibility to ensure that communication is possible. Further details on e-mail protocol are given in the “Guide to the Human Event” available on BlackBoard. If you deviate from these guidelines I will - without notice - ignore your email.
If you have not received a reply to an email within two working days (i.e., excluding weekends), please resend the message. I do not deal with email outside of normal workday hours (i.e. outside M-F, 9 to 5).

If you are emailing me a thesis and/or topic sentences for feedback, do not attach the document in its native format. Instead, cut and paste the text into the email body. That way I can more easily offer feedback. I ignore e-mails that contain attachments.

As per the rules of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I cannot discuss grades over email or on the phone. If you would like to discuss your grades, please arrange to meet with me in person or check the on-line information available on Blackboard.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** As per the Americans with Disabilities Act, I am happy to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. You need to meet with staff from ASU’s Disability Resource Center, as they will explain the process for contacting me about your specific needs. If you have a disability and wish to discuss your specific needs, please make an appointment to do so as soon as possible.

**Respect for Diversity:** Barrett is committed to creating a diverse learning environment, which is broadly defined as a place where cultural diversity is valued and respected. I hope that you will contribute your unique perspectives to this effort by respecting others’ identities and personal life histories and by considering and raising issues as appropriate to course content.

**“Adult” Material:** Some of the works we will be reading will be concerned with “adult” themes and may use language that is colloquial and often vulgar. Our class periods may involve frank discussions of religion, politics and sex, areas of fundamental importance to any society. Please inform me if you expect to have problems with this material so that we can come to a mutual agreement regarding any alternatives.

**Last Word:** Please read this syllabus carefully. By attending the next class you declare that you have read and understood all the above and associated documents in the course reader. I, for my part, will attempt not to change any of the major policies or deadlines without sufficient due notice and discussion with the class as a whole.
**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Aug 19**

Thursday: Introduction to the course

**Aug 26**

Monday: Introduction to the course  
Tuesday: No class  
WTh: *Gilgamesh* (Sumerian, 12th C BCE)

**Sep 2**

MT: No class due to Labor Day  
WTh: *Bereshit* (Hebrew, 6th C BCE) [MA1]

**Sep 9**

MT: Writing a Human Event paper.  
WTh: Homer, *Iliad* (Greek, 7th C BCE) [MA2]  
   Read all of Homer for W/Th.  
**Participation Self-Evaluation #1 due Friday at 8:00am.**

**Sep 16**

MT: Homer, *Iliad* (Greek, 7th C BCE)  
WTh: No class as **Paper #1 is due Friday at 8:00am.**

**Sep 23**

MT: Euripides, *Bacchae* (Greek, 405 BCE)  
WTh: Aristophanes, *Frogs* (Greek, 405 BCE) [MA3 - based on either reading]

**Sep 30**

Plato, *Symposium* (Greek, ~380 BCE) [MA4]

---

2 Dates indicate “Week of Monday ...”. An asterisk indicates reading is available on BlackBoard. [MA#] indicates a mini-argument is due by 10:00am on Sunday of that week.
Participation Self-Evaluation #2 due Friday at 8:00am.

Oct 7

MT: Cicero, *On Duties (Bk II)* (Roman, 1st C BCE)
   Reading is pp. 109 - 159. Also read pp. 169 - 179 for background.
WTh: Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (Roman, 1st C BCE) [MA5 - based on either reading]

   *Academic Status Report #1: if you are performing below expectations, you will receive notification after October 7.*

Oct 14

MT: No class (Fall break)
WTh: Writing a second THE paper.

   *40% of your final grade will be distributed by this week.*

Oct 21

MT: Confucius, *Analects* (Chinese, 5th - 3rd C BCE)
WTh: Lao Tzu, *Tao de Ching* (Chinese, ~4th C BCE) [MA6 - based on either reading]

Oct 28

MT: *Baghavad Gita* (Hindu, 5th - 2nd C BCE)
WTh: *Some Buddhist Texts* (India & Japan, various) [MA7 - based on either reading]

Participation Self-Evaluation #3 due Friday at 8:00am.

Nov 4

No classes as Paper #2 due Friday at 8:00am.

   *Course withdrawal deadline: Nov 6*

Nov 11

MT: No class due to Veteran's Day
WTh: *Ecclesiastes* (Hebrew, ~3rd C BCE) [MA8]
Academic Status Report #2: if you are performing below expectations, you will receive notification after November 11.

Nov 18

Boëthius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Roman, 425 CE) [MA9]
See the online background material for the division of reading.

Nov 25

MT: Dante, *Inferno* (Italian, ~1310 CE) [MA10]
WTh: No class due to Thanksgiving

Dec 2

MT: Montaigne, *Cannibals* (French, ~1580 CE)
WTh: Tying up the loose ends.

*Dec 6: Complete semester withdrawal.*