HON 171: The Human Event

Dr. John Lynch

Meeting: MW, 10:30 - 11:45am, 12:00 - 1:15pm, Sage South 242
Office Hours: Sage South 167, W 1:30 - 3:30pm (see below for important details).
E-mail: john.lynch@asu.edu (please put HON 171 in subject line)

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 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 your ability to reason critically and communicate clearly.
~ To cultivate your ability to engage in intellectual discourse through reading, writing, and discussion.
~ To broaden your 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.

To cultivate multi-disciplinary perspectives.

To develop frameworks for self-directed learning and working within a pluralist society.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

You can expect me to challenge you to think about and understand the material in this course. In return, I expect you to keep up with assignments and to accept responsibility for your learning. Note that, according to Arizona Board of Regents policy, a three-credit course requires approximately eight hours of out-of-class preparation *each week.*

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** The following texts 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 (if necessary) will be made available on the BlackBoard site (http://my.asu.edu) as needed. 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 unless explicitly endorsed by me:* 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:**

Pierre Hadot:

[W]e have forgotten how to read: how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us. This, too, is a spiritual exercise, and one of the most difficult.

Tim Parks:

[A]lways read with a pen in your hands, not beside you on the table, but actually in your hand, ready, armed. And always make [at least] three or four comments on every page, at least one critical, even aggressive. Put a question mark by everything you find suspect. Underline anything you really appreciate. Feel free to write “splendid,” but also, “I don’t believe a word of it.” And even “bullshit.”

*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 literary works we shall study are also 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 successful papers, 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. You should also have a minimum of two substantive questions of your own; we will use these to initiate our daily discussions. Note that 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% (15% will be distributed before Spring Break)
- Argumentative Writing - 50% (30% will be distributed by SB)

Please see the “Guide to the Human Event” folder 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.

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.

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%): Three times during the semester - indicated on the schedule of readings below - you will be required to complete a short online reflection on your participation (not preparation) during the period since the last reflection. Look at the grading rubric and give yourself an honest grade. Justify that grade. Think about what is working for you, what isn’t. What you need to improve. How the group as a whole is functioning. Failure to submit a reflection will result in an automatic and non-negotiable 2.5% deduction from your final grade.

Following submission of each self-evaluation I will provide you with a portion of your final grade. The 50% will be apportioned in four chunks - 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% - with the final portion coming at the end of the semester (and without a self-evaluation)

Argumentative Writing (50%): Your writing must present a clearly organized and persuasive argument relating to the material we have read. You must develop a claim about the work(s) and use evidence from the text to substantiate your claims. 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.

There will be two formal papers, worth 15 and 15%, and a series of four shorter analytical assignments that are worth 5% each. The latter aim to position you for success
in the papers. Please see the “Writing Assignments - Spring 2015” document on Blackboard for full details.

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 Barrett 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://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/barrett-writing-center/ for further details

CONTACTING ME OUTSIDE CLASS (OFFICE HOURS & E-MAIL):

Generally speaking, I recommend discussing any issues you may have with me either before or after class as it is usually more efficient that way. Occasionally after an initial discussion, I will recommend you e-mail me regarding an issue. However in most cases I will not reply to e-mailed questions. In short, unless I indicate otherwise, only e-mail me to setup a meeting outside of my regularly scheduled office hours (see below).

I am available to meet with you in my office at the times listed on page 1 of this syllabus 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.

To make an appointment, please sign up at http://bit.ly/1G9YRIw or use the QR code on the nameplate outside my office. You should sign up at least 24 hours before hand as I will only be checking the schedule once a day on Tuesdays. If there are no appointments, there is no guarantee that I will be in my office the following day.

If you cannot make these hours, I encourage you to e-mail me to seek an appointment. That said, I teach three classes 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. E-mail me with three potential times (within normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm) that you can meet. 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.

As per 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.

**OTHER ISSUES:**

**Statement of Ethics:** 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.

**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.

As this course aims to have you think critically about primary sources, no material beyond our assigned readings may be utilized in your papers and you should not read such material even to prepare for class. In short, resources such as Wikipedia, SparkNotes, Cliff Notes etc. are strictly forbidden and any evidence for their use will result in punishment.

While I will not be enacting Dante’s punishment for fraud, as a minimum punishment, detection of any plagiarism (intentional or not) will result in failure of the course. Egregious cases of plagiarism will result in me petitioning the Office of the Dean to award you a grade of XE. This grade cannot be removed from your official transcripts, denotes failure due to academic dishonesty, and will result in your expulsion from Barrett. It will also preclude you from entry into any reputable graduate or professional school or any venue where ethical behavior is valued.

The bottom-line is, DON’T CONSULT ANYTHING BEYOND OUR PRIMARY TEXTS AND DON’T PLAGIARIZE!

**Disruptive Behavior:** Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class. An instructor may withdraw a student from the course
when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process per “Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior” http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm201-10.html

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.

Attendance: In accordance with Barrett policy, you are allowed two absences without penalty. Each subsequent absence will result in a loss of 5% from your final grade. Please follow the appropriate University policies to request accommodation for religious practices or university sanctioned activities. Arriving late for class, not bringing your (printed) text to class, or bringing the wrong edition all count as an absence.

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.

Technology: At some point this semester your computer may spontaneously combust or some other technological disaster will befall you. You must save your work and you
must have access to an alternate computer in the event your primary machine stops working. Technological difficulties of any kind are not an acceptable excuse for late or missed work in this course.

All formal written assignments should be submitted as Word (DOC or DOCX) documents (not PDF, ODT, RTF or other formats) through Blackboard.\footnote{This does not hold for self-assessments which are to be entered into the submission areas as plain text.} I am aware of the ploy of submitting a corrupted file so as to obtain extra time for an assignment and will automatically fail anyone who submits such a file.

You need to contact the ASU Help Center for all IT questions. Contact the ASU Help Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at: 1-855-ASU-5080 (1-855-278-5080). You can also live chat with the Help Center at \url{http://help.asu.edu}.

**E-mail:** Please ensure your ASU mailbox (or wherever it is being forwarded to) is not full. If an email announcement gets returned to me, I will not attempt to resend the message. It is your responsibility to ensure that communication is possible. Blackboard announcements will be our primary method of communication.

**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.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** As per the Americans with Disabilities Act, I am happy to provide reasonable accommodations for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning or psychiatric disabilities. You need to meet with staff from ASU’s Disability Resource Center early in the semester as I alone cannot make accommodations for you and will not do so after your performance may have suffered. Contact the DRC by going to \url{https://eoss.asu.edu/drc}, calling (480) 965-1234 or emailing DRC@asu.edu.

**“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. Although some students may deem such content offensive, such materials are deemed important for the learning process. Students are not excused from
interacting with such materials, but they are certainly encouraged to express well-formed opinions that express those objections and their reasons for them. Please inform me if you expect to have problems with this material so that we can come to a mutual agreement regarding this.

**Important Dates:**

- **Jan 18:** Deadline for dropping or adding classes w/o approval
- **Feb 9-16:** Academic Status Report #1 offers indication of progress
- **Mar 23-30:** Academic Status Report #2 offers indication of progress
- **Apr 5:** Course withdrawal deadline
- **May 1:** Semester withdrawal deadline
- **May 11:** Final grades due

**Last Word:** Please read this syllabus carefully. By attending class you attest that you have read and understood all the above and any associated documents available online. 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

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<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Reading or Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Introduction to <em>The Human Event</em></td>
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|         | W   | Hesiod, from *Works and Days* (A: 44-47)  
|         |     | Homer, from *Iliad* (A: 230-245)  
|         |     | Greek, 8th C BCE. |
| Jan 19  | M   | No class (Martin Luther King Day) |
|         | W   | From *Genesis* (A: 158-170; read chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 21,22)  
|         |     | and *Job* (A: 193-194, 212-218)  
|         |     | Hebraic, 11th to 4th C BCE |
|         | F   | 10-1 Writing Assignment due on Blackboard by 5:00pm. (5%) |
| Jan 26  | M   | *Epic of Gilgamesh* (A: 99-151)  
|         |     | Mesopotamia, 1900 to 250 BCE. |
|         | W   | Writing A Human Event Paper: Traps and Tips |
|         | F   | Writing Assignment due on Blackboard by 5:00pm. (5%) |
| Feb 2   | M   | Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (A: 655-701)  
|         |     | Greek, 458 BCE |
|         |     | Greek, ~442 BCE |
|         | F   | Participation Assessment #1 due Friday by 5:00pm. (0%) |
| Feb 9   | M   | Euripides, *Medea* (A: 786-822)  
|         |     | Greek, 431 BCE |
|         | W   | In-class Peer Review.  
<p>|         |     | Complete draft of paper (two printed copies) due in class (0%) |
|         | F   | Completed paper #1 due on Blackboard by 5:00pm (15%) |
|         |     | Greece, ~380 BCE. |</p>
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<th>Day</th>
<th>Reading or Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Laozi, <em>Daodejing</em> (A: 1346-1354) China, 6th to 3rd C BCE</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>10-1 Writing Assignment due on Blackboard by 5:00pm. (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>From <em>Bhagavad Gita</em> (A: 1285-1301) India, 4th C BCE to 4th C CE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>In-class Writing Exercise.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Participation Assessment #2 due Friday by 5:00pm (0%) Writing Assignment due on Blackboard by 5:00pm (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 9</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>No class - Spring Break</td>
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<td>The schedule after this point may change depending on how the first half of the semester goes. That said, the due date of paper #2 will not change.</td>
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<td>Mar 16</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>Shikibu, <em>Tale of Genji</em> (B: 1159-1269) Japan, ~1000 CE</td>
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<td>Mar 23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td><em>Tales of the Heike</em> (B: 1289-1311) Japan, 14th C CE</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Dante Alighieri, <em>Inferno</em> (B: 399-409, 504 - 511 and all other Canto summaries) Italy, 1349 CE</td>
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<td>Mar 30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Giovanni Boccachio, <em>Decameron</em> (B: 609-656) Italy, ~1349 CE</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>In-class Peer Review. Complete draft of paper (two printed copies) due in class (0%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Completed paper #2 due on Blackboard by 5:00pm. (15%)</td>
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<td>Apr 6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Marguerite de Navarre, <em>Heptameron</em> (C: 272-302) France, 1559 CE</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Lazarillo de Tormes, <em>The Tale of Lazarillo de Tormes</em> (C: 304-341) Spain, 1554 CE</td>
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<td>Week of</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td><strong>Participation Assessment #3 due Friday by 5:00pm (0%)</strong></td>
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| **Apr 13** | M   | Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (C: 386-430)  
|         |     | Spain, 1605 CE |
|         | W   | Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (C: 430-473) |
| **Apr 20** | M   | Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (C: 473-515)  
|         | W   | Lope De Vega, *Fuenteovejuna* (C: 593-651)  
|         |     | Spain, 1614 CE |
|         | F   | **Writer’s Reflection Assignment due Friday by 5:00pm (0%)** |
| **Apr 27** | M   | Encounter of Europe and the New World (Selection from C: 517-590)  
|         | W   | Last day of class |