"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved"

Charles Darwin, On The Origin of Species, 1859

This section of HON 172 will focus on a selection of modern scientific ideas (for example, the observational work of Galileo, the theoretical work of Newton, the synthetic work of Darwin) and their implications for us as human beings. Throughout, we will be examining these ideas as both “science” (whatever that may mean) and as cultural products, while exploring their implications for our views of ourselves within an apparently vast, impersonal, universe. Particular attention will be paid to apparent tensions between scientific and religious viewpoints.

Readings will be somewhat technical in places, but not overtly so, and non-scientists who are interested in these “great ideas” will benefit. Those wishing to explore the ideas further in more technical detail will be encouraged to do so.

Learning Outcomes:

- Broadening of your cultural background and historical awareness, particularly with relation to scientific modes of thought
- Cultivation of multi-disciplinary perspectives
- Development of frameworks for self-directed learning and working within a pluralist world
- Improvement of skills in close reading, critical discussion and evaluation & construction of oral and written arguments.

Texts:

The following works are required for purchase and are available at the ASU Bookstore or online. Please only purchase these editions. All additional readings will be made available online; please bring them to class. Failure to do so will result in a zero for participation for that class period.

- Galileo, Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo, Trans by Sillman Drake, Doubleday,


Dali Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, Morgan Road.

Stoppard, *Arcadia*, Faber & Faber.

**Supplementary Resources:**

- There will be a class blog at http://humanevent.blog.asu.edu/ where I will post readings, announcements and other pertinent information. Please feel free to use the weekly open discussion thread to ask questions of myself, the TAs, and your peers. While there is a Blackboard for this class, it will not be used except to allow me to email the class as a whole. **Please ensure that your ASU mail account is receiving mail and does not have a full mailbox.** I cannot be held responsible for information you do not receive when I email the class as a group, though wherever possible I will cross-post an announcement to the blog.

- 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 both HON 171 and 172, the Center offers individual tutoring on writing papers for the Human Event and your other courses. Its goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so please take advantage of its services. Go to the BWC web site at http://honors.asu.edu/ and click on "Resources for Current Students." Under Barrett Writing Center, you then can access tutoring schedules, appointment information, and academic background on the staff.

**Reading Texts:**

*The Human Event* is a reading-intensive course and I am willing to guarantee that you will do more reading of primary sources than in any other course you possibly take in your early college career. You are expected to come to each class having read the assignment carefully. Many of the works we shall study are philosophical or scientific in nature, and thus require close and concentrated reading. Casual skimming will (a) not be helpful to you in discussing these works, (b) will inhibit you from developing strong paper topics, and (c) cause you to fail in-class quizzes; 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 seriously? What if not?

**Assignments:**

- Participation – 35%
- Unannounced Quizzes – 10%
- Papers – 55%
Participation: (35%)

*The Human Event* is, by design, a seminar course; you are expected both to have carefully read the assigned reading and to engage in discussion during class-time. As participation is worth 35% 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 do not count as participation*; you must contribute to the discussions. In addition, arrival to class late, sleeping during class, failure to bring your text to class (or not actively using it!), or conversing with neighbors will all immediately and without warning result in a zero for participation during a given class, no matter how much you may talk in that class.

A: The student receiving this grade participates *extensively in the majority* of class discussions. She arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with written comments and questions on the assigned reading. At least occasionally she initiates the discussion, without waiting for the instructor to do so. When towards the end of a discussion the instructor asks for further comments, she almost always has some. She does not, however, try to dominate the class. Instead she listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as she does to the instructor’s questions.

B: The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. She gives evidence of having done the reading. At least part of the time she helps the discussion along by raising her own questions. She pays attention to the comments of her peers.

C: This student participates only intermittently during class periods (perhaps only every second or third class). She is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. She is sometimes unprepared, and lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class.

D: This student seldom contributes to class discussions. While her contributions may be useful, they are infrequent.

E (0%): Student never (or only occasionally) speaks.

I do understand that some individuals are, by nature, quiet and perhaps feel uncomfortable talking in group situations. I do not cold-call students, so the onus is on you to participate or risk losing grade-points.

Please also note, that you should aim for a balance between active *contribution* and active *listening* – the class room should not be dominated by single voices.

Quizzes: (10%)

Assigned readings are subject to up to ten unannounced quizzes held promptly at the beginning of class. Quizzes will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students who pass every quiz will receive a final quiz grade of 10; those who miss or fail one quiz will receive a 9; two, a 8; three, a 7; and so forth. If you appear in class while a quiz is being taken, you will not be allowed enter until the
quiz has been graded. A missed quiz counts as a failed quiz, and quizzes cannot be made up.

**Papers:** (15%, 30%, 10% = 55%)

Papers should be 1500 to 1750 words in length (i.e. approximately six to seven pages in length, double spaced) and no longer. Your paper 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, i.e. our assigned readings, **no** secondary material may be utilized in your papers, as you are being judged on the quality of your ideas, the form in which you present those ideas, and your use of textual evidence. Guidelines for thesis development will be discussed early in the semester.

Easy ways to lose grade points on a paper:

- Submission of a paper that is above the length requirement loses one letter grade.
- Submission of a paper that is below the length requirement will result in failure of the assignment (0%).
- Excessive grammatical and spelling errors (including misspelling author names, places or the title of works) will be punished to varying degrees depending on severity.
- Late papers will not be accepted and will receive a zero grade (0%).
- Note that two copies of a complete draft are due for peer-review. Failure to provide a draft will result in a zero grade.

Beyond these requirements, I am a fair grader who expects you to play close attention to 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.

Some clarifications:

**A:** An A paper is outstanding in **every** way: in the originality of its thought, in the persuasiveness of its argument, and in the clarity and power of its writing. There are no grammatical and spelling errors. The thesis goes beyond what has been discussed in class and everything in the essay relates to that thesis. Each paragraph has a topic sentence. Experience has shown that, on average, five to ten percent of the papers in any given assignment receive an A grade; I will leave you to work out how many that is within a class of this size.

**B:** A B paper is approximately what is to be expected of a student in an honors course. The prose is generally clear and readable, but there are some grammatical problems and some sentences may be awkward. The essay shows serious thought beyond class discussions, and for the most part is well organized.

**C:** An essay in this range is neither especially bad nor distinctively good, It may have a promising thesis but the argument is unconvincing or confusing. It may show little or no original thought.
D: D papers have serious weaknesses in content and style. There is no clear thesis and no movement beyond class concepts. The writing style is difficult to read.

Assorted Policies and Procedures:

Attendance: You are allowed two absences (excused or otherwise) without penalty. Three absences will result in immediate failure of the course. Note that arriving more than five minutes late counts as an absence.

Cell Phones: I switch my phone off when I come to class; You should do so as well. If your phone rings during class, your participation grade will suffer.

Plagiarism: As a student, you are 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. With the advent of the Internet, it has become easier for students to plagiarize. However, somewhat ironically, it has become easier for instructors to detect this form of dishonesty. The faculty of the Barrett Honors College have initiated the use of Internet-based services to detect plagiarism. As such, we have a high probability of detecting fraud, and regularly catch plagiarists using it. You will be required to submit electronic copies of all papers. Upon detection of plagiarism, you will automatically be assigned a course grade of XE which "denotes failure through academic dishonesty and may not be appealed through the grade appeal process." Thus, as a minimum, you will fail this course, will not be able to repeat it, and will be thus unable to graduate from the Barrett Honors College. An ‘XE’ grade on your transcript will also preclude you from entry into any reputable graduate or professional school. The bottom-line is, DON’T PLAGIARIZE!

Grade Appeals: Grades can only be contested in writing (not by e-mail) and not before the class period following return of the paper. Please enclose all relevant material (i.e. the paper as I returned it to you) with your appeal which should engage the comments and criticisms I have made. Avoid claiming that because you worked hard, you deserve an 'A' – it is assumed that you worked hard.

Further Action: Students are directed to the Barrett Honors College's Procedure on Student Academic Grievances at http://www.asu.edu/honors/docs/GradeAppeal.doc.

Miscellanea: BHC professors do not grade on a curve nor do we engage in any grade inflation. No extra credit is available. Professors can initiate a grade change for plagiarism up to two years after the completion of a course. This syllabus is a contract between you and I - by attending this class you declare that you have read and understood all the above.

1 http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html
2 http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial/integrity.html
SYLLABUS OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Aug 22  Introduction to class and requirements.
Aug 24  **Background:** The Scientific Revolution; *Read*, Kant, What is Enlightenment? [Online]

Aug 29  Galileo, “The Starry Messenger” (pp 23-58) & “Letters on Sunspots” (pp 89-144)
Aug 31  Galileo, “Letter to the Grand Duchess” (pp 175-216)

Sep  5  **Workshop:** Writing a Paper for 172.
Sep  7  Newton, *Principia* [Online]

Sep 12  Newton, “General Scholium” to *Principia* & Letter to Bentley;
        Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [Online]
Sep 14  Hume, “On Miracles”

Sep 19  Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
Sep 21  Hume, continued; Paley, *Natural Theology* [Online]

Sep 26  **Interlude:** The Artist as Designer – Gericault’s *Scene of a Shipwreck*
Sep 28  **Peer Review** for Paper 1 – Paper due October 2nd by noon.

Oct  3  **Background:** The Problems Darwin Sought to Solve
Oct  5  Darwin, *Origin of Species*, Chapters 2,3,4,14 [Online]

Oct 10  Darwin, *Descent of Man*, to be announced

Oct 17  Huxley, “Evolution and Ethics” [Online]
Oct 19  Dostyevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*


Oct 31  Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”; Camus “The Guest” [Online]
Nov  2  **Peer Review** for Paper 2 – Paper due Nov 6th by noon.

Nov  7  **Interlude:** How to play nice with others.
Nov  9  Dawkins, “The Selfish Meme” [Online]

Nov 14  Galton, “Eugenics”; others to be announced [Online]
Nov 16  The New Eugenics? Readings to be announced. [Online]

Nov 21  Lightman, *Einstein’s Dreams*
Nov 23  **No class – Thanksgiving**

Nov 28  **Background:** Thinking about thermodynamics and chaos
Nov 30  Stoppard, *Arcadia*

Dec  5  Dali Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, to be decided.