Like HON 171, 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 our relationship to 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? In examining these questions by reading a selection of works from philosophers, other writers, and natural & social scientists, we will aim not to solve these eternal problems, but to show how our views have changed over time. Chronologically speaking, we will cover the period from the 17th Century to modern times.

Aims:

1. Broadening of your cultural background and historical awareness
2. Cultivation of multi-disciplinary perspectives
3. Development of frameworks for self-directed learning and working within a pluralist world
4. 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:

- Issac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*. Penguin USA, 0140245669
- Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*. FL Bender, ed. WW Norton, 0-393-95616-4
Supplementary Resources:

- A class web site is at http://jmlynch.myftp.org/classes/172/ which will feature links to the online readings and other supplementary material.
- The class bulletin board (http://jmlynch.myftp.org/bb) will also be used to distribute paper topics etc.
- The Human Event Writing Center is directed by BHC faculty and staffed by BHC writing tutors who themselves have successfully completed both HON 171 and 172. Its goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so we hope you will take full advantages of its services. Please see http://jmlynch.myftp.org/hewc/ for updated tutoring and workshop schedules, appointment information, academic background on our staff, and internet links related to academic essay writing.

Assignments:

- Papers (2; 20% & 20%) 40%
- Reading journal 20%
- In-class Examinations 5%
- Participation 35%
  - In-class (20%), Online (10%), Peer-Review (5%)

In-Class Examinations: (5%)

Assigned readings are subject to unannounced quizzes held promptly at the beginning of class. Quizzes will be graded on a pass/fail basis. A missed quiz counts as a failed quiz, and quizzes cannot be made up. Students who pass every quiz will receive a final quiz grade of 5; those who miss or fail one quiz will receive a 4; two, a 3; three, a 2; and so forth. No more than five quizzes will be given.

Reading Journal: (20%)

You must come to each class having read the assignment carefully. Casually skimming will not be helpful to you in discussing these works and will inhibit you from developing strong paper topics. Instead of a third essay – and as an aid to your comprehension of the works – you are required to provide a short explication of selected readings. Your journal entry should be typed and should answer the following four 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?

Journal entries will be collected during class. Incomplete or late entries will not be accepted. Journals will be graded on a pass/fail scale and each journal entry is worth 2% of your final grade. This is formal academic writing – use appropriate tone, complete sentences, and logical ideas (particularly when answering question #4).

Participation: (35%)

A: The student in this grade range participates extensively in the majority of class and online discussions. She arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. At least occasionally she initiates the discussion, without waiting for the instructor to do so; in particular she regularly initiates online discussions. 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: The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, 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 and/or online discussions.

_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 in-class participation is worth 20% of your final grade, it is obvious that failure to participate will result in a grade no better than a 'C' no matter how good your written work may be. Remember, coming to class and having read the assigned reader 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 having it open!), and conversing with neighbors will all immediately result in a zero for participation during a given class, no matter how much you may talk in that class.

Participation on the online discussion forum is worth 10% of your final grade. You are expected to provide at least two substantive posts per week and you will be assessed on your performance at noon on Sunday. Posting a large number of messages in a week will not undo loss of marks due to failure to post in prior weeks. While you will be graded both on quality and quantity of your postings you should note that a student who posts ten messages a week is no better off than one that posts two; quality is important. The phrase "substantive posts" implies the following; (a) if you are not initiating a thread, you constructively engage with the comments of your peers, (b) your posting goes beyond comments that were previously made either in class or online, and (c) you quote or refer to textual evidence from our readings. A good post moves beyond class concepts, integrates diverse ideas and texts, and provides an opportunity for others to critically discuss your ideas.

**Papers:** (2 x 20% = 40%)

Papers should be 1250 to 1500 words in length and 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 secondary material may be utilized in your papers, as these will be judged on the quality of your ideas, the form in which you present those ideas, and your use of textual evidence.

Note that failure to submit a paper by the due time and date will result in the loss of one grade point for that assignment per day, or _part thereof_.

The following rule is being implemented: _On finished papers, you can have no more than an average of two of the following errors per page; (i) Spelling, (ii) Proper sentence sense (no words omitted, scrambled, or incomprehensible), (iii) Incorrect tone (this is formal academic writing), and (iv) Proper paragraph content & structure. Thus, for a five page_
paper you will be allowed ten individual errors. If you have more than ten errors, you automatically fail the assignment. As soon as you amass eleven errors, I will stop reading your paper. A failure results in zero marks for the assignment. To avoid this, proof read your paper carefully before submitting. Do not rely on “spell check” or “grammar check” on your computer!

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. On average, five to ten percent of the papers in any given assignment will deserve an A grade; I will leave you to work out how many that is within a class of 16 students.

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.

Policies and Procedures:

**Attendance**: Missing four classes will result in a 50% reduction of your in-class participation score. Missing five classes will result in immediate failure of the course. Missed quizzes or journal collections cannot be made-up. Notify me at least twenty-four hours in advance if you know you are going to be missing from a class and I will try and accommodate you.

**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.

**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 Plagiserve.com to detect plagiarism. This service “the most advanced service designed to assist educators in detecting academic dishonesty ... has an extensive local database of 70,000 student term papers, essays and Cliff Notes [and] searches over 1.3 billion pages when checking originality of [a] paper.” As such, the service has a high probability of detecting fraud, and we have

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already caught plagiarists using it. You will be required to submit printed and electronic copies of all papers. Upon detection of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the assignment, and I will initiate – at my discretion and depending on the extent of the dishonesty – one of the punitive measures outlined below in accordance with ASU policy:

- Assignment of a grade of XE which "denotes failure through academic dishonesty and may not be appealed through the grade appeal process"; or
- Assignment of a failing grade in the course (grades reduced under this policy also may not be appealed through the grade appeals process).

Thus, as a minimum, you will fail this course. Remember, you are a member of the Barrett Honors College. The bottom-line is, DON'T PLAGIARIZE!

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.

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**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

**Week 1**

W 1/22  Introductory class and discussion.

**Week 2: Descartes and the Enlightenment**

M 1/27  Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (Online) [*]³

W 1/29  Kramnick, pp. 1 – 38

**Week 3: Reason & God / Progress & History**

M 2/3    Kramnick, pp. 75 – 180

W 2/5    Kramnick, pp. 351 – 394

**Week 4: Politics & State / Optimism**

M 2/10  Kramnick, pp. 395 – 479

W 2/12  Voltaire, *Candide* (pp. 1 – 75) [*]

**Week 5: The Romantic Movement**

M 2/17  Shelly, *Frankenstein* (pp. 47 – 130)

W 2/19  Shelly, continued. (pp. 130 – 247)

**Week 6: Darwinism**

M 2/24  Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (Online) [*]

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² http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial/integrity.html
³ Readings marked [*] require reading journal entries to be available for collection during the class period indicated.
W 2/26  
*Paper #1 draft due for peer review – return by Friday.*

**Week 7: Marxism**

M 3/3  
Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 54 – 86) [*]

W 3/5  
*No class - Paper #1 due by 4:30pm.*

**Week 8: Nietzsche**

M 3/10  
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals, Essay #1*

W 3/12  
Nietzsche, continued [*]

**Week 9**

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10: Nietzsche & Freud**

M 3/24  
*Paper #2 topic will be distributed online.*

W 3/26  
Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents.* (pp. 10 – 112) [*]

**Week 11: Einstein & Space/Time**

M 3/31  
Introduction to Einstein & Time [Lecture]

W 4/2  
Lightman, *Einstein’s Dreams*

**Week 12: The Holocaust I**

M 4/7  
Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz.* [*]

W 4/9  
Levi, continued. [*]

**Week 13: The Holocaust II**

M 4/14  
Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower.*

W 4/16  
Robinson, *Can A Truly Contemporary Person Not Be An Atheist?* (Online) [*]

**Week 14: Existentialism**

M 4/21  
Sarte, *Existentialism* (Online) [*]

W 4/23  
Camus, *The Guest* (Online)

**Week 15: DNA & How Science "Works"**

M 4/28  
Watson, *The Double Helix* (pp. 7 – 133)

W 4/30  
*Paper #2 Peer review – arrange to return papers by Friday.*

**Week 16: DNA and the Brave New World**

M 5/4  
Huxley, *Brave New World* (pp. 1 – 199)

W 5/6  
Huxley, continued.

*Paper #2 is due by noon on Friday 8th May.*