

HUMA 500: The Humanities Beyond the Disciplines

8:40-10:40 a.m., Tuesdays, 2 credits

DCC 113 (Duncan College 113)

This seminar, required of all first-year doctoral students in the School of Humanities, aims to generate discussion about and reflection on the characteristics, aspirations, and possibilities of advanced work in the humanities. What are the shared stakes of humanistic inquiry? How do we understand the culture, norms, and expectations of graduate study in the humanities? Where do our methods, objects, and theories diverge, and where do they converge and cross-pollinate? The course will serve as a critical meeting ground for students in the School of Humanities and foster intellectual community across the disciplines.

Students will engage contemporary issues in the humanities, explore their own scholarly interests and assumptions, engage with materials from different humanities fields, learn about diverse career paths opened up by Ph.D. study, and meet students and faculty from across the School. Students will be expected to speak with integrity and self-reflexivity about their own disciplinary locations, while exercising and honing critical curiosity about other fields, subfields, and disciplines. The examination of—and possibilities for moving beyond—established disciplinary frameworks will be a primary focus.

Instructors:

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Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- have a richer understanding of their own disciplinary locations
- have an understanding of key contemporary issues and trends in the humanities and be able to articulate and discuss these with both academic peers and broader publics;
- have an understanding of distinct modes of humanistic analysis as well as the interactions and overlaps between these—that is, of both the *disciplines* and of thinking *beyond the disciplines*;

- have an understanding of professional capacities developed over the course of Ph.D. study and the paths these open up both inside and outside the academy.

Student Work and Assessment:

There is no traditional research paper or exam in this course. However, students are expected to do the following:

- Complete the weekly readings before class (approximately 60-70 pages/week) and come prepared to discuss them in detail. Weekly reading loads will vary slightly; page counts for required texts are listed in the syllabus so you can plan ahead as appropriate.
- Submit two events write-ups at the end of the semester (details TBA)
- One presentation of/response to a specific week's texts (details and assignments on the first day of class)

Syllabus

Week 1. Jan 14

Introductions

Week 2. Jan 21

SNOW DAY

Week 3. Jan 28

What is a Discipline?

James Chandler, "Doctrines, Disciplines, Discourses, Departments," *Critical Inquiry* (2009, 20 pages)

Roderick Ferguson, "The Birth of the Interdisciplines," from *The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, (2012, 22 pages)

Jonathan Kramnick, "The Interdisciplinary Fallacy," *Representations* (2017, 17 pages)

Week 4. Feb 4

The Value of the Humanities: Special Session with L. Nandi Theunissen, Department of Philosophy

L. Nandi Theunissen, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Common Humanity" from *The Value of Humanity* (2020, 33 pages)

L. Nandi Theunissen, "Explaining the Value of Human Beings" (2023, 23 pages)

Week 5. Feb 11

What are the Humanities?

David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "Introduction," from *The History Manifesto* (2014, 13 pages)

Ursula K. Heise, "The Environmental Humanities and the Futures of the Human," *New German Critique* (2016, 12 pages)

Eric Hayot, "Humanist Unreason" (5 pages) and "Classrooms, Universities, Methods" from *Humanist Reason: A History. An Argument. A Plan* (2021, 20 pages)

Judith Butler, "The Public Futures of the Humanities" (2022, 14 pages)

Week 6. Feb 18

On Methodology

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story," from *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (2015 [1995], 30 pages)

Anjali Arondekar, "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (2005, 18 pages)

Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "What was 'Close Reading'? A Century of Method in Literary Studies" *minnesota review* (2016, 19 pages)

Week 7. Feb 25

Illuminations: Special Session with Denva Gallant, Department of Art History

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," from *Illuminations* (1942, 12 pages)

Denva Gallant, "Introduction," "Chapter 3: On Temptation," and "Conclusion" from *Illuminating the Vitae Patrum: The Lives of Desert Saints in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (2024, 46 pages)

Week 8. Mar 4

Scales of Analysis: Local, National, Global

David Harvey, "Space as a Key Word," *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (2006, 29 pages)

Anna Tsing, "The Global Situation," *Cultural Anthropology* (2000, 34 pages)

Week 9. Mar 11

More Than Human(ities): Special Session with Azucena Castro, Department of Modern and Classical Literatures and Cultures

Azucena Castro, et al. "Energy sovereignty storytelling: Art practices, community-led transitions, and territorial futures in Latin America," *Tapuya* (2024, 25 pages)

Verónica Hollman and Azucena Castro, "Reclaiming Energy Flows: Energy GeoHumanities and the Socio-Ecologies of Rivers in Latin American Hydro-Modernities," *Geohumanities* (2024, 20 pages)

Week 10. Mar 18

Spring Break

Week 11. Mar 25

Superhumanities: Special Session with Jeff Kripal, Department of Religion

Jeff Kripal, "Introduction: How the Book Came to Be" and "Chapter 1: Legitimate Science Fiction" from *The Superhumanities: Historical Precedents, Moral Objections, New Realities* (2022, 69 pages)

Week 12. Apr 1

Agency, Power, and Structures

Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance" from *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (1980, 48 pages)

William H. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* (1992, 29 pages)

Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* (2003, 13 pages)

Francis Wade and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Interview with Gayatri Spivak: 'The Subaltern Speaks Through Dying,'" *The Nation* (2021, 6 pages)

Week 13. Apr 8

Public and Semi-Public Writing: Between Intellectual and Amateur

Edward Said, "Representations of the Intellectual," "Professionals and Amateurs," "Speaking Truth to Power" from *Representations of the Intellectual* (1993, 41 pages)

Lili Loofbourow and Philip Maciak, "The Time of the Semi-Public Intellectual" (2015, 7 pages)

Evan Kindley, "Growing Up in Public" (2015, 7 pages)

Leonard Cassuto, “The General Public? How About the Field Next Door?” (2024, 3 pages)

Week 14. Apr 15

Academic Writing: Style and Craft in the Humanities

Eric Hayot, excerpts from *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* (2014, 30 pages)

Amitava Kumar, excerpts from *Every Day I Write the Book: Notes on Style* (2020, 28 pages)

Leonard Cassuto, “The Primal Scene of Academic Writing” and “Why the Academic Reader is a Different Animal than the General Reader” from *Academic Writing as if Readers Matter* (2024, 12 pages)

Week 15. Apr 22

Provincializing the US: The Humanities in a Global Context

Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, “Academe’s Shameful Neglect of Spanish” (2020, 11 pages) and “The Humanities Are Worth Fighting For” (2023, 12 pages)

Eric Adler, “The Hypocrisy of English Only ‘Decolonization’” (2023, 5 pages)

Maya Wind, “Chapter 4: Epistemic Occupation” from *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (2024, 30 pages)

Policies and Notes

Revisions to Syllabus: This syllabus is a working document and guide for the course. Information contained in the course syllabus may be subject to change with advance notice, in order to better meet our course objectives.

Attendance and Participation: This is a reading intensive course. It is expected that you will have done the reading for each class period before coming to class, that you will bring a copy of the text with you, along with your notebook and note-taking implement, and that you will participate actively in discussion. Excessive tardiness and unexcused absences are disrespectful to our community.

AI: All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University's academic regulations. You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software. As per the Rice Honor Code, AI is a source. If you use it, you must cite it and explain how it was used.

Disability Resource Center: If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with the Instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

Rice Honor Code: In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, which you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the "Honor System Handbook" tab at honor.rice.edu. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

The Honor Council's Standard Definitions and Policies are available here. This course adopts the standard definitions of the Honor Council with the following qualification:

- All texts read and introduced in this course must be cited in discussion posts, online forums, and papers; they are not considered "textbooks" or "common knowledge."

Title IX Responsible Employee Notification: Rice University cares about your wellbeing and safety. Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of harassment, pregnancy discrimination or gender discrimination or relationship, sexual, or other forms interpersonal violence to seek support through The SAFE Office. Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees, including myself, as the instructor/TA, are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. For more information, please visit safe.rice.edu or email titleixsupport@rice.edu.

Dean's Policy on Religious Accommodations: Both Rice's policy of non-discrimination on the basis of religion and our core values of diversity and inclusion require instructors to make reasonable accommodations to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. It is never acceptable for an instructor to compel a student to choose between religious observance and academic work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent; students remain responsible for work missed.

Academic Support and Other Resources: Your health, safety, and wellbeing are the priority always, and must be ensured before you can be successful in any course of study. If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, or are otherwise struggling to meet basic needs, there are many people here at Rice who can help, including:

- Access and Opportunity Portal: <https://aop.rice.edu/>
- Wellbeing and Counseling Center: <https://wellbeing.rice.edu/>
- Office of Student Success Initiatives: <https://success.rice.edu/>
- Disability Resource Center: <https://drc.rice.edu/>
- Office of Academic Advising: <https://oaa.rice.edu/>
- Center for Academic and Professional Communication:
<https://pwc.rice.edu/center-academic-and-professional-communication>
- Office of International Students and Scholars: <https://oiss.rice.edu/>
- The Pantry: <https://success.rice.edu/accessibility-resources/pantry>