

**Eastern Kentucky University**  
**Department of Foreign Languages and Humanities**  
**HUM 300W: Humanity in the Postmodern Age**  
**CRN: XXXXX**

**Instructor: Dr. Erik Liddell**  
**Office: Case Annex 347**  
**Hours: MW 10am-Noon, TR 2-3pm or by apt.**  
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**Course Catalogue Description:**

**HUM 300W Humanity in the Postmodern Age. (3) A.**

Prerequisite: ENG 102, 105(B), or HON 102. Comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of culture since 1945, including study of Western and non-Western works of literature, visual art, music, film, and religion/philosophy; focus on integrative thinking as a means toward affirming values for living meaningfully in the contemporary world. Credit will not be awarded for both HUM 300 and 300W. Gen. Ed. E-3A, 3B.

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary study of humanity in the postmodern age through a combination of literature, art, music, film, drama and theory. Students will demonstrate a familiarity with individual artists and writers and a comprehension of major developments in literature and a variety of art forms primarily through a series of critical and creative writing assignments, including bi-weekly Blackboard discussions (1 original post plus 2 responses), homework compositions and reflection pieces, and an essay developed through a proposal-draft-revision sequence. Students will also write a final exam (short answer questions and one essay).

**Required Texts and Materials:**

- \* Paul Auster, *City of Glass* (Penguin) (EKU Bkst)
- \* Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (HBJ) (EKU Bkst)
- \* Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Ballantine) (EKU Bkst)
- \* Paula Geyh et al., eds., *Postmodern American Fiction* (Norton) (EKU Bkst)
- \* Jonathan Fineberg, *Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being* (Prentice Hall) (EKU Bkst.)
- \* Heiner Mueller, *Hamletmachine*. Online at  
<http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/Hamletmachine.PDF>
- \* Film: *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (1968), dir. William Greaves. Readings free online
- \* Film: *Blade Runner* (Director's Cut) dir. Ridley Scott (1982).



**Humanistic Studies:** Many students are unfamiliar with the humanities and have questions about what a course in the humanities entails. Humanities is a study of human life. A course in the humanities will investigate previous and current inquiries of the human condition. We will ask questions like: What is the meaning of life? What is human nature? What does it mean to be human? How do we become complete as human beings? We will seek to resolve these questions through studying philosophical, literary, artistic, and musical achievements that have grappled with such questions. A course in the humanities will enable students to better understand themselves and how they fit into the broader classification of humanity. This course will give students the opportunity to determine their responsibility to society and perhaps society's responsibility to them, noting the interconnectedness between the self and humankind. Completing this course will give students a better appreciation of our world and the values that we as humans share.

**Skills Developed in the Humanities:** Students that complete this course will gain greater verbal, written, and analytical skills to enable them to read, interpret, and evaluate literary and artistic works and be able to apply these skills to other academic areas. Students also will be able to think more critically and creatively, constantly seeking to question and improve their world. These are skills that will support your personal and professional growth. These are also skills that are transferrable and adaptable to a wide variety of work situations.

#### **A. General Education Goals and the Course**

Students will be able to:

1. Use appropriate methods of critical thinking and quantitative reasoning to examine issues and to identify solutions. (Goal two)
2. Analyze the values, cultural context, and aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophic, and/or religious works. (Goal six)
3. Distinguish the methods that underlie the search for knowledge in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, history, and social and behavioral sciences. (Goal seven)
4. Integrate knowledge that will deepen their understanding of, and will inform their own choices about, issues of personal and public importance. (Goal eight)

#### **B. Student Learning Outcomes**

The General Education Goals are achieved through the study of selected works of literature, visual arts, drama, and music. Students will be introduced to various critical methods to enable them to interpret such art works in a systematic and rational way. Such critical models will help students explore and articulate their interpretations so that they may better understand and define the cultural and personal values inherent in the arts. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Analyze through written work the essential humanistic problems and complications of twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Comprehension and Clarity of Expression).

2. Critically examine major modern and postmodern works of literature, art, drama, film, and music (Contextual Analysis).
3. Understand and analyze the humanistic concepts of twentieth and twenty-first century and apply them to modern and post-modern problems and works of art, literature, drama, film, and music (Comprehension, Contextual Analysis, Theoretical Application).
4. Examine and evaluate the various aesthetic and cultural movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in historical context (Comprehension, Context, and Theoretical Application).
5. Differentiate and evaluate in written work modern and postmodern perspectives as expressed in works of art, literature, drama, film, and music. In written work, express ideas that are clearly formulated, grammatically correct, and stylistically competent. (Integration Across the Course; Clarity of Expression).

### **C. Writing Intensive Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to demonstrate the writing process to produce effective documents appropriate to course level.
2. Students will be able to recognize effective writing strategies.
3. Students will be able to use critical thinking to expand, express, explore, and evaluate course content through written communication.

### **GRADING:**

**Attendance and Participation: 15%** (including in-class informal writing assignments)

**Discussion Boards: 20%** (one 200-word original entry + two 100-word replies for each)

**Short Compositions: 20%** (around 500 words each, properly formatted and referenced)

**Essay proposal/Creative Project prospectus: 5%** (details TBA)

**Essay draft/Creative Project developmental discussion** (submitted for feedback and revision): **5%**

**Essay or Creative Project and Critical Explanation: 15%.** The full essay option may be creative in its own right, employing writing strategies of postmodernism, or it may be a traditional analysis of some theme, concept, problem or phenomenon associated with postmodernism/postmodernity. The creative project may be a work of art, a short film, a screenplay, or some other postmodern-inspired product; this project must be accompanied by a fully developed, written discussion that explains the project's ideas, development, approach, aim, and outcomes.

**Final Exam: 20%.** Take-home, to be submitted via BB SafeAssign. Will cover elements from the whole term. Will be distributed one week in advance of due date.

**SCHEDULE** (subject to change with notice):

TUE Jan 14: Introduction to the Course

THU Jan 16: *Postmodern American Fiction*, “Introduction,” pp. ix-xxx. *Art Since 1940*, “Preface” and “Introduction”

TUE Jan 21: *PAF* Ch. VII Casebook of Postmodern Theory: Hassan, Bérubé, Eco, Baudrillard.

THU Jan 23 *AS 1940* Ch. 2: New York in the Forties

\*\*\* **DB 1** due Sunday Jan 26

TUE Jan 28: *PAF*, Ch I Breaking the Frame: Pynchon, Burroughs, Vonnegut, Maso, Phillips

THU Jan 30: *AS 1940* Ch 3: A Dialogue with Europe

\*\*\* **Composition 1** due Sunday, Feb. 2 on BB Safe Assign

TUE Feb. 4: *PAF* Ch II Fact Meets Fiction: Capote, Mailer, Vollman, O’Brien, Anzaldua

THU Feb 6: *AS 1940* Ch. 4: Existentialism Comes to the Fore

\*\*\* **DB 2** due Sunday, Feb 9

TUE Feb 11: *AS 1940* Ch. 5: New European Masters of the Late Forties & Ch. 6: Some International Tendencies of the Fifties

THU Feb 13: *PAF* Ch. III: Kantor, Barry, Anderson, Mason, Gifford

\*\*\* **Composition 2** due Sunday, Feb 16 on BB Safe Assign

TUE Feb 18: *AS 1940*, Ch. 7, The Beat Generation

THU Feb 20: *PAF*, Ch IV Revisiting History: Spiegelmann, Silko, Doctorow, Heller

\*\*\* **DB 3** due Sunday, Feb 23

TUE Feb 25: *AS 1940*, Ch. 8: Asian and European Vanguards of the Later Fifties

THU Feb 27: *AS 1940*, Ch. 9: The Landscape of Signs: Pop Art / Music of the Velvet Underground

\*\*\* **Composition 3** due Sunday, Mar. 2 on BB Safe Assign

TUE Mar 4: H. Mueller, *The Hamletmachine* Online at:

<http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/Hamletmachine.PDF>

Film: *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*.

Readings online: Steven Soderbergh interviews Wm. Greaves:

<http://fastcheapmoviethoughts.blogspot.com/2010/05/william-greaves-and-steven-soderbergh.html>, Amy Taubin, Criterion Collection Essay:

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/460-symbiopsychotaxiplasm-still-no-answers>, Wm. Greaves' Website: <http://www.williamgreaves.com/symbio.htm>

THU Mar. 6 Film: *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, concl.

\*\*\* **DB 4** due Thursday, Mar 6

### **March 10-14: Spring Break!**

TUE Mar 18: Auster, *City of Glass*

THU Mar 20: Auster, *City of Glass*, concl.

\*\*\* **DB 5** due Sunday, March 23

TUE Mar 25: Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night A Traveller*

THU Mar 27: Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night A Traveller*

\*\*\* **Composition 4** due Sunday, Mar 30 on BB Safe Assign

TUE Apr 1: Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night A Traveller*

THU Apr 3: *PAF*, Ch. VI Technoculture: Gibson, Le Guin, Delillo, Russ, Coupland

\*\*\* **DB 6** due Sunday, Apr 6

TUE Apr 8: Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

THU APR 10: Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

\*\*\* **Essay Proposal** due Sunday, Apr 13

TUE Apr 15: Film: *Blade Runner*

THU Apr 17: Film: *Blade Runner*, concl.

\*\*\***DB 7** due Sunday, Apr. 20

\*\*\* **Essay Rough Draft / Creative Project Explanation** due on Sunday, Apr 20

TUE Apr 22: *AS 1940*, Ch. 10: In the Nature of Materials: The Later Sixties

THU Apr 24: *AS 1940*, Ch. 11: Politics and Postmodernism, Ch. 12: Corporate Culture and its Enemies

\*\*\* **Essay Final Draft / Creative Project Explanation** due Sunday Apr 29 on BB Safe Assign – Creative Projects will be submitted in class on Tuesday, Apr. 29 (as applicable)

TUE Apr 29: *AS 1940*, Ch. 13: Painting in the Seventies / Music Sampling 1 – *Who Sampled?* Website

THU May 1: *AS 1940* Ch. 14: The Eighties / Music Sampling 2 – *Who Sampled?* Website

\*\*\*\*\* **DB 7** due Sunday, May 4

\*\*\***FINAL EXAM** – take home, due at end of exam time as scheduled by Registrar

END OF COURSE: Have a great summer!

**Student Progress**

Students will receive written feedback regarding their performance on discussion papers, compositions, and in-class assignments by the middle of the term.

### **Attendance and Participation Policy**

- Students are expected to be in class every day, to be punctual, to participate in all activities, and to do all of the homework assignments. Failure to do so may jeopardize progress and the final grade for the course
  
- Students are ordinarily allowed three (3) absences on MWF sequence or two (2) on TR sequence, excused or unexcused, without penalty. Other absences will result in a decreased grade, or automatic failure in the course, at the discretion of the instructor. Absences will be counted beginning with the first class meeting, as indicated in the University calendar. Two (2) tardy arrivals will be counted as one absence. Note: Any grade components (e.g., exercises, quizzes, exams) that are missed owing to unexcused absences or tardiness are automatically forfeited.
  
- In cases of personal illness, death in the family, or other extenuating circumstances, the student must present documented and properly-dated evidence of his or her inability to attend classes. However, the student is responsible for all work missed during the period of absence. The student is responsible for getting in touch with the instructor to ask about assignments. Excuses must be submitted within one (1) week of the time of return to class.
  - Students are advised to officially withdraw from the course if they are absent for an extended unexcused period. Failure to do so will result in a non-negotiable grade of F or FN. In such cases, a grade of "I" (incomplete) is not an option.
  
- NOTE: There is a zero-tolerance policy for disruptive texting and cell-phone use in this class. If you need to check your phone, please excuse yourself and leave the classroom. If your behavior becomes disruptive to the instructor or to other students, you will be asked to leave immediately and you will forfeit any graded elements from that class period.

### **Drop/Add and Withdrawal Deadlines**

Students should consult the Schedule of Dates on the Colonel's Compass regarding Drop/Add and Withdrawal dates: <http://colonelscompass.eku.edu/calendar-spring-2014>

### **Disability Statement**

*A student with a "disability" may be an individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as learning, seeing or hearing. Additionally, pregnancy or a related medical condition that causes a similar substantial limitation may also be considered a disability under the ADA.* If you are registered with the Office of Services for Individuals with Disabilities, please obtain your accommodation letters from the OSID and present them to the course instructor to discuss any academic accommodations you need. If you believe you need accommodation and are not registered with the OSID, please contact the office in the

Whitlock Building Room 361 by email at [disserv@eku.edu](mailto:disserv@eku.edu) or by telephone at (859) 622-2933. Upon individual request, this syllabus can be made available in an alternative format.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

Students are advised that ECU's Academic Integrity policy will strictly be enforced in this course. The Academic Integrity policy is available at [www.academicintegrity.eku.edu](http://www.academicintegrity.eku.edu). Questions regarding the policy may be directed to the Office of Academic Integrity.

### **Official E-mail and Blackboard Access**

An official ECU e-mail is established for each registered student, each faculty member, and each staff member. All university communications sent via e-mail will be sent to this ECU e-mail address. If you have any difficulties with ECU e-mail, Blackboard or any other technological aspect of this course, please contact the Information Technology Help Desk, whose job it is to help you, at (859) 622-3000. Their webpage, on which you'll find a link to Blackboard Support, is: <http://www.it.eku.edu/helpdesk/>.

### **Expectations of the Students**

**Overall:** Students need to be able to keep up with the weekly reading assignments, ask questions when they do not understand the material or need further clarification, and complete the assignments on time. **Participation:** Participation is helpful in class to provide feedback. Participation is vital to class discussions because this class is designed to explore issues from a cross-disciplinary standpoint; thus, class discussions are important in order to express different ideas and raising new perspectives.

**Preparedness:** Students should be responsible adults, coming to class with the necessary texts so they can participate in class discussions. Students who do not bring required material to class may be asked to leave for the day and asked to be better prepared in the future so that they can more effectively learn and contribute to class discussions.

**Civility:** Civil behavior enhances the academic setting and is expected at all times. Courtesy and respect for others are essential elements of the academic culture. The academic environment welcomes a difference of opinion, discourse, and debate within a civil environment.

**Academic Behavior:** Students are encouraged to maintain the highest standards of behavior. Sleeping in class, talking, passing notes, text messaging, or otherwise being disruptive or disrespectful should never occur in class. Please conduct yourselves in a responsible manner during the class. Students that act irresponsibly in class will be asked to leave for the day and may return on a subsequent day once such behavior has been corrected.