

HUM 3302 Faith and Reason: A Humanistic Dialogue (Fall 2020)

Course Information

Title: Faith and Reason: A Humanistic Dialogue

Online (Zoom and Blackboard)

TR 1:30-2:50

Credit: 3 hours

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Elisabeth Sommer

Office location: 219 Kelley Hall

Office hours: Tuesday 3:00-5:00; Wednesday 11:00-12:00 via Zoom; **Please note: I will keep Zoom open all day M-F if you need to meet with me outside of office hours**

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Instructor Introduction (who the heck am I?)

I began my professional life as a professor of European History and have published in that field. I taught for several years at Grand Valley State University, and have also taught at Wake Forest University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As sometimes happens with the vagaries of life, I turned my attention to museums. I did graduate coursework in Public History/Museum Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and then held positions at the Staten Island Historical Society (Director of Research and Interpretation) and Roanoke Island Festival Park on the Outer Banks of N.C. (Manager of Education and Interpretation), after which I taught Museum Studies at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia. Most recently I served as Education Curator for the El Paso Museum of Art. I hold a BA in History from UNC-Greensboro and a PhD in European History from the University of Virginia. Okay, that's more than enough about me.

Course Description

This course is designed to **give you an overview of the Humanities as they shaped and were shaped by developments in Western Europe** from the Middle Ages through the Reformation (c. 600-1600). To accomplish this somewhat monumental task, we will focus on "spotlight" readings in literature, philosophy, and religion, as well as exploring art and music as it relates to the course themes. I have divided the class into sections for each historical period. Lectures will provide a general historical context, and I will also put a Western Civilization textbook on reserve in the library for your reference. **You'll be expected to read the lectures ahead of time and we'll review them in our Zoom meeting.**

Make no mistake, the **readings in this course will be challenging**, but they expose fascinating things about the development of European culture, government, and attitudes. We will also have some fun with them (just wait until you read some of the university students' drinking songs). The approximately 1000 years covered in the class saw a continual dialogue between the influence of the classical worlds of Greece and Rome, Germanic warrior values, and

Christian spiritual ideals. As I hope you'll learn during the course of the course, there was no straight path from faith to reason, despite the insistence of Renaissance thinkers that they had rediscovered classical reason. As even they would admit, faith was never left behind, nor was reason ever abandoned (except maybe during those student drinking binges).

Course Style

The class is **divided into sections** for each time period covered. The sections include a background lecture setting out the theme, discussions of representative literary, philosophical, and religious texts, and an opportunity to explore art through videos and visuals and listen to period music.

Please take note—the success of this class depends on your willingness to do the following:

Read the assignments **carefully** (and keep a dictionary and/or your internet device handy)

Read them **on time**

Take notes, including page numbers for reference

Add your voice to the general discussion

Notice my previous use of the term “we.” This class is not the Dr. Sommer show. While I will provide background lectures and steer the discussions, the true success of the class will depend on your ability to **keep up with the reading assignments** and be prepared to **discuss them** on the date for which they are listed. Each assignment will have a **set of discussion questions** to guide your reading. These will be **posted on Blackboard**. The assigned readings to be covered each class period are listed in parentheses after the topic.

Class Expectations in the Age of COVID

The presence of the coronavirus has forced us to rethink both how we teach, and how we evaluate students. I realize that many of you may have found your lives upended with children attending class at home, job loss, extended work hours for those in essential positions, and concern for older relatives. As a result, I've built in some flexibility into coursework and deadlines. That said, we still need to learn as a team to the degree that we're able.

To that end, you will be expected to **engage with the readings and participate in class discussions**. Please **enable your camera (via web or phone)** during our online sessions. It makes communication easier if we can all see each other. If there is a problem with enabling the camera, please let me know ahead of time. We'll communicate using both video and chat box, so if there's a problem with your microphone/audio, you can participate via chat. **All Zoom class sessions will be recorded and posted to Blackboard.** I will not share the recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. **You may not share recordings outside of this course.** If you are unable to attend a class meeting, let me know ahead of time if possible. You are responsible for reviewing the recorded session to see what you missed.

Reading Assignments

Discussions will be based largely on readings from the following collection of primary source materials:

Classics of Western Thought Volume II: Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation, Karl F. Thompson, ed. **All readings from this book are posted on Blackboard.** You do not have to purchase it.

Writing Assignments

Writing assignments will consist of **2 short (3-4 page) papers**, an **open note midterm**, and a **final comprehensive essay**. The paper topics are posted on Blackboard. There will be a topic for each of the six sections of the class. In other words, papers will each cover material from one of the time periods under study. You may choose the sections on which you'd like to write.

Papers are due on the first day of the following section. In other words, papers for the section on the Early Middle Ages are due on the lecture day for the High Middle Ages. All papers are due by midnight of the due date noted in the syllabus. Papers can be uploaded to Blackboard or emailed to me.

Paper Format:

Papers are to be double spaced with proper paragraphing. **All references to the primary source texts need to be notated, including all quotations (even if it is only a phrase).** For notations **please use the following format as a model:** (*Classics*, Chaucer, p.142) as in (*Book Title*, Author—when known, page number or numbers). The notation should immediately follow the quotation or reference.

All papers should have a **clear introductory thesis paragraph** that establishes the argument to be made in the body of the paper. The body of the paper should **include specific examples** to support the points made.

The Danger Zone:

The following is a list of mistakes that make me scream and tear my hair out. While this might be very amusing for you, remember that I hold the power of the grade.

- Papers with no clear thesis
- Use of “would of” to mean “would have” and all other phonetic spelling silliness (what else would you call it? “Would of” simply makes no sense.)
- Incorrect use of “amount” and “number” (“number”=a group of individual objects, such as balls, houses, trees, cookies, etc. “amount”=water, flour, concrete etc.)
- Switching “their” and “there” (not interchangeable)
- Using commas for periods and vice versa
- Incomplete sentences (except in very rare occasions for emphasis)
- Incorrect use of apostrophes (only used to indicate possession or for a contraction, not in the case of plurals—I don't care what sign producers do)

To help you avoid some of these, and better understand my comments, [I've posted a Brief Primer on English Grammar on Blackboard.](#)

Grades

General Guidelines:

The following is intended to give you a general idea of my grading standards. Be aware that there are a lot of "gray areas" within these guidelines (I have not, for instance, specified pluses and minuses). While these are designed for the short essays, they will also form the basis for the assessment of the proposal project.

A = Paper is well organized, with a clear thesis and supporting evidence/examples. It contains no major spelling or grammatical errors (i.e. has been proofread). It includes references from more than one of the assigned readings for that section. It also shows careful and thoughtful reading of the assignments and an understanding of the material from lectures and discussions where these are relevant to the topic.

B = Paper is generally well organized, with a minimum of structural errors. It shows a good grasp of the issues pertinent to the topic, but may misinterpret them in some ways or fail to use the strongest examples to support the argument/analysis. The use or discussion of methodologies is limited. **A "B" is a perfectly respectable grade.**

C = Paper is loosely organized, and focus is not immediately clear. It contains a fair number of structural errors (i.e. has not been proofread). It lacks sufficient solid examples to support the argument/analysis. It may be too subjective and/or does not clearly relate to the assigned readings and lecture materials.

D = Paper is basically unorganized, with glaring grammatical and spelling errors. It shows little understanding of the assigned readings or issues discussed in class, or it indicates a serious misunderstanding of the same. The author needs to come and see me.

Grading Breakdown:

Discussion/Participation	10% (includes attendance)
Short Papers	20% each
Midterm	20%
Final	30%

COVID Procedures and Policies

Any day that you are planning to be on campus you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. If you think you or a family member might have COVID-19, don't come to campus and please arrange to get tested ASAP (Information on testing in El Paso is here <http://epstrong.org/testing.php>). If you test positive, have recent contact with someone who did, or have symptoms, the University urges you to report this. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. Since COVID can be asymptomatic, please take advantage of campus

testing. The information on testing is here <https://www.utep.edu/resuming-campus-operations/news/august/utep-coronavirus-proactive-testing-program.html>.

Also, please take care of yourself! I know this situation has been hard for me. Many of us are not made for isolation and not one of us is made for chronic stress. There are funds available from the CARES Act specifically set aside for student assistance. The link to information about these funds is here <https://www.utep.edu/resuming-campus-operations/faqs/index.html>.

Now for the Fun Stuff!

Aug. 25: Introduction—So what are the Humanities anyway?

Section 1: The Early Middle Ages c.600-1000

Aug. 27: Lecture review: The Creation of Medieval Europe

Sept.1: The Role of the Church (discussion of “The Rule of St. Benedict,” *Classics* Chapter 1, and selections from *The Life of Leoba*)

Sept. 3: The Ideal Ruler (discussion of selections from *The Life of Charlemagne*)

Sept. 8: Art and Music in the Early Middle Ages

Section 2: The High Middle Ages c.1000-1300

Sept.10: Lecture review: The Creative World of the High Middle Ages and the Rise of Cities (**papers on Section 1 due**)

Sept. 15: New Ideals in Religious Life (discussion of selected writings of and about St. Francis of Assisi)

Sept. 17: Universities and Intellectual Life (discussion of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summation of Knowledge*, *Classics* Chapter 7; student poetry, *Classics* Chapter 4 pp. 54-60, and selected readings on student life)

Sept. 22: Art and Music in the High Middle Ages

Section 3: The Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance c. 1300-1500

Sept. 24: Lecture review: Crisis and Rebirth (**papers on Section 2 due**)

Sept. 29: A Religious Response to Plague and Church Crisis(discussion of St. Catherine of Siena’s “The Dialogue,” *Classics*, Chapter 14)

Oct. 1: Literary Responses to Plague and Social Change (discussion of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, *Classics*, Chapter 16, pp. 215-219 and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Classics*, Chapter 13, selections from the "Prologue" read pp.142-149 and 152-159)

Oct. 6: A Philosophical Response: New Ideas about Humanity and Learning (discussion of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's "Oration on the Dignity of Man," *Classics*, Chapter 18)

Oct. 8: Artistic Response

Oct. 13: **Midterm (midterms due by midnight, no Zoom meeting)**

Section 4: The High Renaissance in Italy c.1500-1600

Oct. 15: Lecture review: The Fall of the City-States and the Rise of the Rulers (**papers on Section 3 due**)

Oct. 20: A New View of the Ruler (discussion of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, *Classics*, Chapter 20)

Oct. 22: Courtly Art and Architecture

Section 5: Renaissance England c. 1500-1600

Oct. 27: Lecture review: England's Golden Age (**papers on Section 4 due**)

Oct. 29: English Humanism and a Social Critique (discussion of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, *Classics*, Chapter 22)

Nov. 3: Theater in the Renaissance (discussion of Act I of Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Classics*, Chapter 28, pp. 395-418) **Zoom attendance voluntary--VOTE**

Nov. 5: Discussion of *Othello* continued (back to required Zoom attendance—sorry)

Section 6: Religious Reformation and Revolution c. 1500-1600

Nov. 10: Lecture review: The Splintering of the Church and Society (**papers on Section 5 due**)

Nov. 12: The Critique of Contemporary Religious Life (discussion of Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly*, *Classics*, Chapter 18, pp.263-272)

Nov. 17: Luther Opens the Floodgates (discussion of *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *Classics*, Chapter 30, pp.518-530)

Nov. 19: Unintended Consequences ("The Twelve Articles of the Peasants")

Nov. 24: The Catholic Response (discussion of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises, Classics*, Chapter 32)

Nov. 26: **Thanksgiving!!**

Dec. 1: The Impact of Religious Change on Art and Music (**papers on Section 6 due**)

Dec. 3: Review and discussion of topics for final paper

Final Papers are due to me by 6:00 on Thursday, Dec. 10.