

Charis Quay

Draft Course Syllabus for (a new version of) 'Introduction to the Humanities'

Context: I offered an 'introduction to humanities' seminar from 2014 to 2023 (except for 2 years when another colleague did it). The students were in their L3 year of Physics, Chemistry or (sometimes) Biology. Once, there was a PhD student.

For some time now, I have been thinking of evolving the class to focus on questions of the self, the other, difference, violence, justice and peace (both *aman* and *damai*, as peace can also be violent). (*Aman* = absence of physical violence, *damai* = harmonious relationships, *sejahtera* = peace within oneself.) This to some extent flows from one of the main foci of the first version of the class: how we see ourselves and others, especially others who are different from us.

In terms of structure, we could perhaps first consider the idea of the other and difference on a personal level, then from a more societal and systemic level, and conclude with a couple of readings which help students to reflect on how these ideas apply to the environments they are in, the shared one being of course the university. Suggestions of visual texts (images, videos...) etc. would also be welcome!

The main constraint is that the readings have to be in English. [Perhaps this is no longer true.] I would like to try to start with easier readings and have a mix of popularisations as well as more academic works. It would be good to include some visual texts. In the first version of the class, I showed some of John Berger's 'Ways of Seeing' documentaries in the first couple of classes. Of the readings presently assigned, students generally find Koyré and Taylor quite difficult.

Here are some ideas of books from which readings could be assigned.

The Body in Pain, Elaine Scarry

It and Thou, Martin Buber

Sources of the Self, Charles Taylor?

Exclusion and Embrace, Miroslav Volf (perhaps too theological)

5th Cartesian Meditation, Husserl?

On the Problem of Empathy, Edith Stein

Totality and Infinity, Levinas?

Conflict of Interpretations, Ricoeur?

Grammatology by Derrida

John Berger again?

Orientalism (or other works) by Edward Said

Myth of the Lazy Native, Syed Hussein Al-Attas

My Grandmother's Hands, Resmaa Menakem (maybe a bit too American for this audience?)

René Girard – perhaps something from an intro text (e.g. M Kirwan or M Head) and something from Violence and the Sacred? (Or from J William's anthology)

Just and Unjust Peace (or other works) by Daniel Philpott

something by Hannah Arendt?

Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson (Similar: Before Religion, Brent Nongbri)

Idea of Justice, Amartya Sen (or 'Boundaries of Justice' a shorter article on the same ideas which appeared in the New Republic)

Goliath's Curse, Luke Kemp

Against Decolonisation, Olúfemi Táíwò (seems similar to Terry Eagleton's After Theory)

Teaching to Transgress (or other works) by bell hooks

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (or other works) by Paulo Friere

Something by Michael Polanyi to end on a different/more hopeful note?

Something else on the more hopeful end of the spectrum...? (There are David Bentley Hart's Beauty of the Infinite and his sources, but they are probably too theological.)