HUMS 065: Education and the Life Worth Living
MW 9-10:15am
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Course Description

What is an education for? What does it have to do with real life—not just any life, but a life worth living? We will explore these questions through engagement with the visions of five very different ways of imagining the good life and, therefore, of imagining education: the traditions of Confucianism and Christianity and three diverse modern thinkers. By the end, students will be prepared to ask the question of the good life and to put that question at the heart of their college education.

Assignments and Evaluation

All written assignments should be submitted via the Canvas assignment tool. Late papers will receive a grade reduction of one step (e.g., from A- to B+) for each day or part of a day that they are late.

1. One 1000-word (maximum) paper analyzing an ancient tradition’s account of the human being and of education. On this tradition’s account: (1) What is a human being? (2) What is a flourishing human being—i.e., What is a life worth living? (3) What is an education for and what ought it to look like—i.e., How does an education contribute to the flourishing of a human being? Finally, in your encounter with this tradition, what have you learned about what you believe a human being is, what it takes for a human being to flourish, and what sort of education you’d need to flourish? Due October 2 or October 23 by 11:59pm. (20 percent of final grade)

2. One 1000-word (maximum) paper analyzing a modern author’s account of the human being and of education. On this author’s account: (1) What is a human being? (2) What is a flourishing human being—i.e., What is a life worth living? (3) What is an education for and what ought it to look like—i.e., How does an education contribute to the flourishing of a human being? Finally, in your encounter with this author, what have you learned about what you believe a human being is, what it takes for a human being to flourish, and what sort of education you’d need to flourish? Due October 30, November 6, November 13, November 20 by 11:59pm. (20 percent of final grade)

3. Peer review of drafts of classmates’ final papers, online and in person November 30 and December 2. (10 percent of final grade)

4. 1250 word (maximum) paper outlining what sort of person you want to become and how your college education will help you become that person. First drafts due November 27. Final drafts due December 10 by 5:00pm. (30 percent of final grade)

5. Students will be expected to actively participate in all class sessions—both by speaking and by listening generously—and to complete weekly self-assessments. (20 percent of final grade)

Grades are assigned according to the following guidelines for papers: “A” designates an excellent paper that performs the task assigned, has superior content, is carefully composed and elegantly written. Good writing style is essential for an “A.” “B” is a good paper that fulfills the assignment and is basically well-written. “C” papers fulfill the assignment but are not well-written. “D” means that the paper just barely fulfills the assignment. “F” means the paper does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.
Academic Integrity: Part of learning to participate in scholarly dialogue is learning to cite one's sources properly. For all written assignments, sources must be cited properly (any format is acceptable so long as it is consistent and cites specific page numbers within a given work). For help preparing written assignments—including help preparing proper citations—students should consult the Yale Writing Center (http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students).

Course Policies: Attendance at all seminar meetings (via Zoom) is expected except in case of emergencies. Unexcused absences from the seminar will result in a reduction of the final course grade.

Required Texts (prices through bn.com)


Schedule of Meetings

The Contemporary Crisis in College Education

**August 31:** Course Introduction

**September 2:** “College”: An American Idea


**September 7:** Education, Democracy, and the Market


**September 9:** Education, Race, and “The Dream”

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 25-64, 135-152

Confucianism

**September 14** Analects I

**September 16**  
Analects II  

**September 21**  
Self and Society  

**September 23**  
Education I: Self-Cultivation  

**September 28**  
Education II: Mencius  
Mencius, 2A6, 6A1, 2, 6-9, 11, 14-18  

**September 30**  
Education III: Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi)  
Chu Hsi, *Learning to Be a Sage*, selections

**Confucianism Papers Due October 2**

**Christianity**

**October 5**  
The Life of Jesus  
“Introduction to the Life of Jesus,” Selections from the New Testament

**October 7**  
New Testament Visions of Flourishing Life  

**October 12**  
God, Meaning, Pleasure, & the World  
Genesis 1-3  

**October 14**  
Augustine of Hippo’s Theological Anthropology

Augustine, *Confessions*, selections.  
———, *Sermon 179A*, §4.

**October 19**  
Education I: Cultural Liturgies

Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God”

**October 21**  
Education II: Belonging

Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, selections

*Christianity Paper Due October 23*

**Modern Options**

**October 26**  
Rousseau I: The Inner Voice and the Self

———. *Emile*, Book IV (selections).

**October 28**  
Rousseau II: Pedagogy


**November 2**  
Wollstonecraft I: Anthropology and Private Education

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chapters 2, 6, 10–11.

**November 4**  
Wollstonecraft II: National Education


**November 9**  
Freire I: Education and Liberation

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 1

**November 11**  
Freire II: The Banking Concept of Education
Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 2

**November 16**  bell hooks I

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, selections

**November 18**  bell hooks II

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, selections

**What Is Your Education For?**

**November 30**  Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 1

**December 2**  Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 2

*Final Papers Due December 10*