



J.M.W. Turner: War. The Exile and the Rock Limpet

Human Nature and the Meaning of Life

Global Great Books 2000F

Fall 2021

Dr. Sara MacDonald

Wednesday 9:30-11:30 and Friday 10:30-11:30

Room: W8

Global Great Books: Human Nature and the Meaning of Life

Dr. Sara MacDonald

Office: H115

Office Hours: By appointment

Prerequisite(s): [Global Great Books 1002F/G](#) or permission of Coordinator.

Course Description

At some point in our lives, we have all probably woken up in the middle of the night a little confused, maybe anxious, and wondered what is the point of it all. Why do we exist? Is there some greater meaning to human life or do we make our own meaning as we go? Are we, am I fulfilling my potential? What if I am missing the one thing that will give my life purpose? Well, if I wasn't anxious yet, I certainly am now that I've written those questions. In this class, we are going to read and think about what some of the greatest authors from around the world have thought about these questions. We will put their ideas into conversation with each other and with our own experiences. At the end of the course, you may likely still not know what the meaning of life is, but you will have thought long and deeply about it, so that when you do discover it, you will recognize it for what it is.

Course Objectives:

1. Students learn to read and think critically.
2. Students gain the ability to analyze ideas and situations, make considered decisions and form coherent, reasoned and fact-based judgements.
3. Students become familiar with a selection of the writings of the world's influential writers, and acquire an understanding of the key components of various cultural traditions.

4. Students learn to be clear and concise writers.
5. Students will explore what it means to be human and gain a series of foundational ideas concerning the meaning of life.
7. This course will prepare students for further courses in Global Great Books.

Required Texts

To Purchase:

Homer, *Iliad*, Ecco. ISBN: 0062046284

Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Everyman, ISBN: 0679433139

Ibn Tufyal, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, University of Chicago Press, ISBN: 0226303109

Robinson, *Son of a Trickster*, Random House, ISBN: 978-0345810793

King, *Sufferance*, Harper Collins, ISBN: 9781443463102

Evaluation

1 short writing assignments (2-3 pages) 10%

Field Report (2-3 pages) 10%

Podcast (10 minutes) 15%

2 Essays (6-8 pages each) 15 % each

Creative Project 20%

Participation 15%

Class Format

This will be a discussion-based class focusing primarily on the assigned readings. You are required to complete the assigned reading before each class so that you can actively and helpfully participate.

For students who are unable to attend classes in person either because they are international students or have been given academic accommodation, I will live broadcast and record our class sessions and post them to Owl on the same day. It will be your responsibility to do the reading, watch the recordings, and email me any questions or

thoughts that you have about that day's material or work. Your Participation grade will be calculated according to how many times email me with your comments or questions

Tentative Schedule of Classes

(Please note that this schedule may change depending on the pace with which we move through the readings).

Date	Reading	Assignments Due
Sept 8	Class Intro.	
Sept. 10	Bhavagad Gita	
Sept. 15	Bhavagad Gita	Short Writing Assignment
Sept. 17	Bhavagad Gita	
Sept. 22	Iliad	
Sept. 24	Sanctuary Farm	
Sept. 29	Iliad	Field Report
Oct. 1	Iliad	
Oct. 6	Iliad	
Oct. 8	Iliad	Essay 1
Oct. 13	Hayy Ibn Yaqzan	
Oct. 15	Hayy Ibn Yaqzan	
Oct. 20	Hayy Ibn Yaqzan	
Oct. 22	Son of a Trickster	
Oct. 27	Son of a Trickster	
Oct. 29	Son of a trickster	
Nov. 1-7	Break	
Nov. 10	The Divine Comedy	Creative Assignment
Nov. 12	DC	
Nov. 17	DC	
Nov. 19	DC	
Nov. 24	DC	
Nov. 26	DC	Essay 2
Dec. 1	Sufferance	
Dec. 3	Sufferance	
Dec. 8	Sufferance	Podcast

Description of Assignments

Short Writing Assignments

You will write 1 short essay style papers (2-3 page). These will be on an assigned topic and based on a reading we are doing in class. They will involve close reading and interpretation of the texts in question. You will not use any external sources to write this.

Essays 15% each

You will write two 4-6 page formal essays based on a given prompt or set of prompts.

Essay format. A clear introductory paragraph stating the issue or question to be addressed, and the conclusion you reach. This is called a **thesis statement**. In the body of the essay you must clearly explain the author's position(s) with respect to the essay prompt, employing quotations where appropriate as evidence. An excellent essay will demonstrate that you have closely read and analysed the text and are able to clearly and logically lay out an argument. A brief concluding paragraph summarizing your interpretation, principal arguments, and conclusions.

- **Note.** Please consult Professor MacDonald if you require any further assistance with the research, formatting or organization of your essays.

What makes a good essay? A clearly stated thesis. A solid grasp of the theory/ideas under consideration. Appropriate use of quotations, illustrations, and arguments. Quotations should be integrated into sentences so that the whole sentence reads grammatically. A thoughtful analysis of the theory/ideas. The essay should be well structured with a smooth transition between points/paragraphs, and it should be well- written (properly structured sentences, with appropriate terminology, grammar and punctuation).

Endnotes or Footnotes. Footnotes/endnotes are needed for all quotations and for ideas that are borrowed or paraphrased from texts. The first footnote/endnote citation of a text must include the full name of the author, complete title of the work, place and date of publication, and the page number quoted or referred to. Succeeding citations to the same text should be rendered in short form.

Bibliography. Essays must conclude with a bibliography of all sources used in the writing of the essay, including the full name of the author, complete title of the work, place and date of publication, and the page number quoted or referred to.

Page numbering. The pages of the essay should be consecutively numbered.

Italicize or underline the titles of books or pamphlets. The titles of articles or chapters should not be italicized, but enclosed by quotation marks.

Secondary sources. No secondary sources are to be used.

Podcast

In a group of 3-4 other students, you will prepare a podcast. In your podcast, you will examine a current environmental issue in relationship to one of the texts that we will read in the class. You can be creative with your podcast. For instance, you might have the author or one of their characters as a guest or a host of the podcast. You could do an investigative podcast, a business report, etc. The following tasks should be assigned to members of your group: Script writing, podcast hosts/guests, editing. Resources for creating podcasts can be found here:

<https://www.huronresearch.ca/podcasting/>.

Field Report

We will visit Ralphy's Retreat, a sanctuary farm on Friday September 24. For those unable to go on the trip an alternative assignment will be given. After the visit, you will be asked to write 2-3 pages in which you reflect on your experience there. To do this you will want to think about what the founders of Ralphy's Retreat intended when they created this sanctuary farm, about the existence of such farms, and the ways that humans interact with animals.

Alternative assignment: to visit a natural space in your location. While there reflect on green spaces within urban environments or how such spaces are treated if you live in a rural area. Are these spots intentional? What is the intent? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks? How might technology enhance or detract from these areas.

Creative Project

Creative Assignment Rubric

This is not an assignment meant to terrify or fail you, but to get you think about the things we've been talking about in a different way. As an assignment or skills builder, it's purpose is to get you to see how you can apply (and see) these philosophic concepts to any number of formats. In other words, just as these accounts of what it means to be human underlie much of what we do, they are also present in the creative world around us, including the works of popular culture that we are immersed in every day.

Also, it's important to exercise your imaginative powers. Just as much as thinking about important ideas requires critical reflection and analytical abilities, we also need to be able to imagine things differently or imagine solutions to real problems. So just as reading a difficult text develops your skills to read closely and analyze ideas, so you have to train your imagination to work in tandem with your reflective abilities.

If you are looking for ideas as to what you might create, I'm really open to anything, but here are some ideas of genres — poetry, songs, last semester a student put together a hip hop routine, a collage, drawings, a series of photographs, a video set to music, perhaps a collage of a fashion

line that would exemplify the 2021 line based on Homer's Iliad, a video interview where you are both the interviewer and Dante.

You will also include a 3-5 page explanation of what you have created, showing me how this creative piece is a reflection or a response to the text in question.

Your project can be a criticism of the philosophic work you are portraying.

Here's how I will evaluate your projects:

30% Your concept — does it demonstrate a thorough understanding of the philosophic account or literary idea being used? Does the genre or the form of creative work work well with the content matter? For instance, does it make sense to write a pop song to assess the ideas in *Sufferance* (and if so why?) Is it well thought out in both design and content?

30% Creative Product - is it clearly related to the philosophy it is portraying? Is your interpretation of the philosophic work accurate/interesting? Is the finished product well-constructed (ie: is the poem proof read, is the video edited with care taken to sound, is the painting or drawing done with care (ie: not scribbled on the back of napkin unless this is part of the concept)).

40% Your Explanation: in your explanation, please explain your concept, why you chose this particular genre of art, how your piece of artwork depicts the philosopher at hand and anything else you think I should know to be able to understand your work. This is where you can show me your philosophic chops in a more explicit way (ie: you might not have footnotes on your painting....) As always, this should be proofread, etc.

About Me

I'm happy to meet with you to discuss any of the things we are doing in class. You can schedule an appointment either by speaking to me before or after class, or sending me an email. During the school week, I will try to return all emails within 24 hours.

COURSE GUIDELINES

GRADING OF Written ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments will be graded on the basis of: (1) appropriate and adequate substantive content, analysing and explaining the text in relation to the question posed in the assignment. It is crucial that you do not summarize the text. Make sure you provide a detailed argument that is an explicit response to the essay prompt. (2) Writing style, including grammar and construction of a logical argument.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory, students who miss more than 3 unexcused sessions per term, will lose 2% of their final grade for each additional class.

PAPER SUBMISSION

Essays/Assignments must be submitted to the OWL course site. Finished assignments must be submitted by 11:59 pm on the day that they are due.

ESSAY DOCUMENTATION

Students must use standard social science reference, footnoting and bibliographic form.

Whenever you use the words or the ideas of someone else, you must give a footnote, endnote or reference, or else you are committing an act of plagiarism (see Plagiarism and Other Academic Offences below).

CITING INTERNET SOURCES

All information obtained through the Internet must be cited in footnotes and bibliographies. Internet citations must include all of the same information that is provided when citing a book or article. This includes the name of the author, name of the organisation that has posted the website, the title, the date that the website was consulted, and the complete website address.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The University of Western Ontario Senate has adopted a set of grade descriptors which explain the meaning of grades assigned in all university courses:

- A.+ 90–100%
- A 80–89%
- B 70–79%
- C 60–69%
- D 50–59%
- F below 50%

Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca

Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.