



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

## **Human Nature and the Meaning of Life**

Global Great Books 2000F 550

Dr. Sara MacDonald

W. 9:30-11:30 and F. 10:30-11:30 in V207

## **Global Great Books: Human Nature and the Meaning of Life**

**Dr. Sara MacDonald**

Office: A217

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30-12:30 and By Appointment

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### **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 the meaning of life. 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 analyse ideas and situations, make considered decisions and form coherent and reasoned 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 how to be clear and concise writers.
5. This course will prepare students for further courses in Global Great Books.

### **Required Texts**

#### **To Purchase:**

Plato, *The Phaedo*, Hackett Publishing, ISBN: 0915144182

*The Bhagavad Gita*, Penguin Publishing, ISBN: 9780140447903

Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, University of Chicago Press, ISBN: 9780226303109

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780199535903

David Adam's Richards, *Mercy Among the Children*, ISBN: 0385259956

### **Evaluation**

Creative Assignment 15%

2 Essays (5-6 pages) 20% each

Podcast 15%

Participation/Attendance 10%

1 Field Trip Reflection (choice of 2) 10%

Scene Enactment 10%

### **Class Format**

This will be a discussion-based class. We will all have read the assigned text before class and come in ready to discuss it. I will update OWL each week so you know what you are responsible for the following week. I'll ask you questions, sometimes directly, and you can do the same to me. Feel free to raise alternative perspectives or interpretations of the texts in question and to think and speak critically about it. The content for each class will come from the books we are reading

### Tentative Schedule of Classes

Each week you will be asked to read a piece of literature or philosophy. You will watch a short video lecture or read a piece of text connected to the works in questions, you will work with a group or individually on a short piece of writing or other assignment.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Sept. 9	The Syllabus	
Sept. 14 and 16	<b>Weil: On Beauty</b> Hand Out	
Sept. 21 and 23	<b>Phaedo</b>	
Sept. 28 and 30	<b>Phaedo/ Bhagavad Gita</b>	
October 5 and 7	<b>Bhagavad Gita</b>	Essay 1
Oct. 12 and 14	<b>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</b>	
Oct. 19 and 21	<b>The Truth About Stories</b>	
Oct. 26 and 28	Flex Week (Because we will fall behind)	Creative Assignments
<b>November 2 and 4</b>	Take a Break	
Nov. 9 and 11	<b>The Tempest</b>	
Nov. 16 and 18	<b>The Tempest</b>	Essay 2
Nov. 23 and 25	<b>Mercy Among the Children</b>	
Nov. 30 and Dec. 2	<b>Mercy Among the Children</b>	Podcasts
Dec. 7 and 9	<b>Scene Presentations</b>	Scene Presentations

## Assignments

### Creative Assignment

I have a hunch that figuring out the meaning of life and your life, in particular, might require a little imagination, a faculty that we are not normally asked to flex unless we are artists of one kind or another. For this assignment you will reflect on one of the readings we have completed so far and create a response to it. Your response can be in any genre you choose – a painting or drawing, song lyrics (and performance if that's your thing), a photo essay, a video montage, a poem, a short story, etc. The point is to be imaginative and to try to evoke the kind of response in me (your audience) as you had to the text. You will write 3-5 page explanation of your piece that will include what message you were hoping to get across, how this relates to the text in question, why you chose the genre that you did, how that genre is appropriate given both the text in question and your response to it and your process. This will be fun. At some point you will think, "this is fun." Or you will have nightmares in which I tell you again and again how fun this is supposed to be. Hopefully the latter does not happen. If this assignment seems too stressful we can substitute something else, so just let me know.

### Podcast

Within a group of 4-5 students, you will create a podcast. In your podcast you will discuss some element of *Mercy Among the Children* that you find interesting, funny, infuriating, beautiful, etc. I will provide you with a kind of rubric and guidelines about how to go about this. These will be posted on the OWL page for the other students to listen to. (10-15 minutes)

### Scene Enactment

Within a group of 4-5 students you will enact a scene from *The Tempest*. You can decide whether to play the scene straight as it is written or to update it or change it entirely. You will record this in advance so that we can watch them as a class. After watching your scene, you and your group will explain why you made the choices that you did.

### Essays

You will write two 6-8 page 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 philosopher'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.

## **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. Drafts of in-class essays must be submitted at the end of the class period. Finished assignments must be submitted by 11:59 pm on the day that they are due.

### **ESSAY DOCUMENTATION**

Students must use standard social science or humanities 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%

○ **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:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).”

Additionally,

A) If written work will be assigned in the course and plagiarism-checking software might be used, the following statement to this effect must be included in the course outline: “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> ).”

B) If computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be given, and software might be used to check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating, the following statement must be added to course outlines: “ Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.”

**Plagiarism** is an academic offense and will be treated as such. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, Department Chair, or Dean’s Office, as well as the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism, available at the Reference Desk in the Huron University College Library and at [www.huronuc.on.ca](http://www.huronuc.on.ca). In addition, students may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the Huron University College Library. Information about these resources can be found at <https://huronuc.libguides.com/citingsources> .

- **Support Services:** The websites for Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>), and the same for affiliated university colleges when appropriate, and any appropriate Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>) and the Student Development Services, should be provided for easy access.

“Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.”

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](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)

Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)

Chaplaincy: [gthorne@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:gthorne@huron.uwo.ca)

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, [www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/).

The Student Emergency Response Team (SERT) provides medical response to 9-1-1 calls on Main, Brescia and Huron campuses which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during the academic year. SERT is dispatched through the campus community Police Service (CCPS) to any medical emergency on campus at (519) 661-3300.

For more information about SERT please visit: [www.sert.uwo.ca/about-sert/aboutsert/](http://www.sert.uwo.ca/about-sert/aboutsert/) .





## **Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022**

### **Pandemic Contingency**

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no further disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

### **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>.

### **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.

### **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: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

### **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: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/academic_calendar) . 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](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, tablets, 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**

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, 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) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising**

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. 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. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

**c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto: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. 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: [accommodation\\_medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto: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](mailto: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>

### **Wellness and Health Supports 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. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. 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](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)

Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)

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

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/academic-calendar/)