

# Honors Special Topics Seminar, HNRS 245, Spring 2013

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each block in Room TBD, 6-8pm

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**Office:** Virginia Hall 306

**Hours:** M-F half hour before and after class, and by appointment.

**Phone:** (423) 636-7300, ext. 5640

## Course Description

This course is a semester-long seminar that will provide students with opportunities to explore special topics over an extended period of time with other Honors students. Seminar topics will vary by semester and will be selected and taught by professors who are passionate about their subject matter. Seminars may be interdisciplinary or team taught. Seminars will meet twice each block throughout a semester. Seminars may include extensive readings, creative and reflective writings, analysis of various media, off campus field trips, guest speakers and extensive class discussion. Note: Topics to vary and the same topic may not be repeated for additional credit. Prerequisite: HNRS 101 or permission of the program. Learning Outcome: Writing.

## Course Goals

To build an intellectual and interdisciplinary community among students in the honors program; to develop students' understanding of humanistic principles derived from the Renaissance tradition of scholarship and philosophical expression; to develop students' facility with writing, reading, thinking, and reflection; to develop students' abilities to discourse comfortably on subjects relevant to the human condition.

## Required Texts and Supplies

*How to Live: Or, A Life of Montaigne In One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer*, Sarah Bakewell  
ISBN 978-159051483-2

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will reflect on life's larger questions and write reflexive essays in the personal, subjective manner of Michel de Montaigne, which they will post to an online forum.
2. Students will read about the life of Montaigne and also become familiar with his more accessible essays.
3. Students will consider the Montaignean essay as a vehicle for self-discovery, and a mode of subjective philosophical expression.
4. Students will consider and discuss the personal views of peers in an open, collegial way, while respecting the differences of others, both face-to-face and when online.
5. Students will use dialogue and civil engagement with peers to build community, understanding, respect, humility, and tolerance, both face-to-face and through online media.

The way we are instructed, it is no wonder if neither the students nor the masters grow in ability, although they do make themselves more learned . . . Whether he has become better or wiser, which would be the main thing, that is left out. We should have asked who is better learned, not who is more learned.

-- Montaigne, "Of Pedantry"

One can tie up all moral philosophy with an ordinary and private life just as easily as with a life of richer stuff: each person bears the entire form of the human condition.

-- Montaigne, "Of Repentance"

## **Student Support Services: Students with Disabilities**

Tusculum provides individuals with disabilities reasonable accommodations to participate in educational programs, activities, and services. Students with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should contact Dr. Lisa Johnson, Room 112, Annie Hogan Byrd, at (423) 636-7300, extension 5693.

## **Tusculum College Academic Resources**

Students may arrange for additional academic assistance through the Academic Resources Center in Greeneville by contacting Jill Jones, Director of Academic Advising, Academic Resource Center, Room 100, Annie Hogan Byrd, at (423) 636-7300, extension 5153.

## **Plagiarism**

Given the amount of personal writing in this class, it is not likely that anyone will be required to work with sources apart from an occasional quote that can easily be credited to its author internally. Please ask if you are unsure about the borrowing of words, ideas, or images. Consult the Tusculum College catalog, page 25 if you are unclear regarding the seriousness of using sources without proper acknowledgement.

## **Attendance: Absences and Missed Work**

Because this class meets only twice a block in the evening, for a total of eight meetings over the semester, attendance is imperative. Each missed meeting will lower your final grade by 12.5 points. Because all work is digital, aside from class participation, there is no excuse for missing deadlines or failing to post assignments.

## **Grading Scale**

<b>A</b>	94-100	<b>B</b>	84-86	<b>C</b>	74-76	<b>D</b>	64-66
<b>A-</b>	90-93	<b>B-</b>	80-83	<b>C-</b>	70-73	<b>D-</b>	60-63
<b>B+</b>	87-89	<b>C+</b>	77-79	<b>D+</b>	67-69	<b>F</b>	0-59

## **Assignments**

- 30% Participation in Discussion of Readings and Class Writings
- 40% Reflective Essay Posts on Class Blog (300-500 words, due 48 hours before each meeting)
- 30 % Peer Responses to Essay Posts (Must comment on at least three posts, about 100 words each)

Participation in Discussion: Everyone must contribute something to our meetings. Please be aware that you will not earn points for dominating class discussion. I want to hear from everyone.

Reflective Essay Post on Class Blog: You will post seven reflective essays of 300-500 words each on our class blog which is found at <<http://montaigne245.wordpress.com/>>, at least 48 hours before each scheduled meeting. This timeframe is critical so that everyone has a chance to browse the posts before class. Lateness will cost you, so please be timely. Essays will be in response to a question I pose at the end of each meeting.

Peer Responses to Essay Posts: Prior to each meeting, you will read the essay posts by your peers and respond to at least three, with comments of 100-150 words each. Be thoughtful, polite, and creative with your responses. Ideally, conversations should grow from your interest in others' viewpoints.

## Reading and Discussion Schedule

### *Block Five*

1

Wednesday, Jan 23

Syllabus, introductions. Watch and discuss “Montaigne on Self-Esteem.” Read and discuss “To the Reader.”

2

Wednesday, Jan 30

*How to Live* 1-63 and “Of Practice”

It may be said with some plausibility that there is an abecedarian ignorance that comes before knowledge, and another, doctoral ignorance that comes after knowledge: an ignorance that knowledge creates and engenders, just as it undoes and destroys the first.

--Montaigne, “Of Vain Subtleties”

### *Block Six*

3

Wednesday, Feb 20

*How to Live* 64-153 and “Of the Power of the Imagination”

4

Wednesday, Feb 27

*How to Live* 154-194 and “Of Cannibals”

I like to be ignorant of the count of what I have, so as to feel my loss less exactly.

--Montaigne, “Of Presumption”

### *Block Seven*

5

Wednesday, Mar 20

*How to Live* 195-244, “Of Smells,” “Of a Monstrous Child,” and “Of Presumption”

6

Wednesday, Mar 27

*How to Live* 245-290 and “By diverse means we arrive at the same ends”

### *Block Eight*

7

Wednesday, Apr 24

*How to Live* 291-328 and “Of Pedantry”

8

Wednesday, May 1

“On Some Verses of Virgil”

In truth, either reason is joking or her target must be our happiness; all the labor of reason must be to make us live well, and at our ease, as Holy Scripture says. All the opinions in the world reach the same point, that pleasure is our target even though they may get there by different means; otherwise we would throw them out immediately, for who would listen to anyone whose goal was to achieve for us pain and suffering?

--Montaigne, “To philosophize is to learn how to die”