Honors 101 – Freshman Honors Seminar  
Fall 2006  
1:00 - 2:15 TTH - SMBHC 106  

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Course Description

In his poem, *Ithaca*, C.P. Cavafy reminds us of the importance of embracing the search for meaning in life. He also counsels us that it is not the final destination that matters, but rather the voyage: “When you set out on your journey to Ithaca, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge.” It is this type of voyage that you are about to begin with your honors experience, and it is this search for meaning and identity that we will tackle this semester. We will indeed be taking the long road, as the questions we will be asking have no easy answers. But we will be taking this adventure together, and it is in this give and take, this learning from each other, that we will discover the most about ourselves, our society, and our ability to influence the world around us even as it shapes us.

Course Requirements and Grade

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Journal writing/informal essays</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-formal essays (6 at 2 pages each)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Formal essays (3 at 7 pages each)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Examination/group project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Honors 101 aims to develop critical thinking and mature writing skills. To these ends, the course is writing-intensive, requiring a significant amount of semi-formal (12 pages) and formal (20) essay work. In addition, we will be engaging in regular informal journal writing as a means of stimulating thought and discussion on our readings and whatever else we may find.

Honors College Academic Regulations

*Academic integrity* is essential to all the values upon which the university is founded. Honors students must therefore embody academic honesty in all aspects of their work. Of particular concern are issues related to plagiarism, which while often unintentional, still represents significant problems of academic integrity. One goal of the writing component of this course is to help develop writing skills that avoid this pitfall. A student with a documented case of plagiarism or academic cheating in an honors course will face the possibility of receiving the grade of F for the course and being dismissed from the Honors College. Specific consequences of such behavior will be determined by the administration and individual faculty member.

*Attendance.* Honors courses are small classes, usually taught in seminar style with no more than sixteen students. They are reading, writing and discussion intensive. Student participation is
therefore essential. In addition, the university commits extensive resources, especially in terms of faculty time, to these small classes. For these reasons, the Honors College has an attendance policy for all honors courses, both required and departmental. Students are entitled to two absences in Tuesday/Thursday classes and to three absences in Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes. Consequences of additional absences will be determined by the individual faculty member, but additional absences will lower your grade.

**Texts**

The honors faculty have selected four common texts for Hon 101. The texts are available at the campus bookstore:

- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*
- Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
- Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*
- Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Our class will read several additional major works, which are available at Square Books on the Oxford Square:

- Kurt Vonnegut, *Slapstick*
- Cormac McCarthy, *Child of God*
- Judith Guest, *Ordinary People*
- Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*

A coursepack with additional required readings is available at Sir Speedy. Finally, SMBHC also recommends that you buy a copy of “A Writer’s Resource: A Handbook for Research and Writing.” (Mamon and Peritz), the style manual now adopted by the University. This book is available at the campus bookstore. I also recommend the following: Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, and Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves.*

Because one theme of this course is an appreciation of the self in society, it is important to cultivate the habit of keeping informed of the world around you. To that end, please go to, bookmark, and browse daily the *Washington Post* at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Being that I am a political scientist by trade, I have no doubt that we will find ourselves working current events into our discussions.

**Introduction**

*We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake.* Henry David Thoreau

*Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.* Thomas Jefferson

Tuesday, 8/22: Introduction

C.P. Cavafy, *Ithaca*
Thursday, 8/24: P.J. O’Rourke “Why I Believe What I Believe”
William Greider, “Why I Don’t Believe What He Believes”

And, just for fun:
World’s Smallest Political Quiz: http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz.html
Beyond Red and Blue – see where you fit: http://www.people-press.org/fit/

Tuesday, 8/29
Plato, The Allegory of the Cave
Martin Amis, “Heavy Water”

Thursday, 8/31: No Class: Instructor attending APSA meetings

**Knowing “The Self” in Society**

*What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.*

Shakespeare, Hamlet (II, ii)

*Man’s characteristic privilege is that the bond he accepts is not physical but moral; that is, social. He is governed not by a material environment brutally imposed on him, but by a conscience superior to his own, the superiority of which he feels. Because the greater, better part of his existence transcends the body, he escapes the body’s yoke, but is subject to that of society.*

Emile Durkheim

*Be a good animal, true to your animal instincts.* D.H. Lawrence

Tuesday, 9/5
Tim O’Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*

Thursday, 9/7:
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*

Tuesday, 9/12:
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*

Thursday, 9/14:

Tuesday, 9/19:
Cormac McCarthy, *Child of God*

**The Possibilities and Limits of Human Nature**

*We are armed with language adequate to describe each leaf of the filed, but not to describe human character.* Henry David Thoreau
Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart.  Salman Rushdie

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.  Mahatma Gandhi

Thursday, 9/21 Larry Brown, “Facing the Music,” “Kubuku Rides,”
Tuesday, 9/26 Mark Richard, “The Birds for Christmas,” “This Is Us, Excellent”
Thursday, 9/28 Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*
Sunday, 10/1: Sean Brown’s 8th birthday
Tuesday, 10/3 Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*

**The State and Civil Disobedience**

The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it -- a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes -- will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.
John Stuart Mill

Each man must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, which course is patriotic and which isn’t. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide against your conviction is to be an unqualified and excusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may.  Mark Twain

As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever.  Clarence Darrow

It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do.  Edmund Burke

Thursday, 10/5 Movie: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
Tuesday, 10/10 Movie: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
Thursday, 10/12 Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
Tuesday, 10/17 Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
Women and Men

*Love at first sight is easy to understand; it's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle.*  Amy Bloom

*Sometimes if you're lucky, someone comes into your life who'll take up a place in your heart that no one else can fill, someone who's tighter than a twin, more with you than your own shadow, who gets deeper under your skin than your own blood and bones.*  Snoop Dogg

*You come to love not by finding the perfect person, but by seeing an imperfect person perfectly.*  Sam Keen

*If the world were a logical place, men would ride side saddle.*  Rita Mae Brown

Thursday, 10/19  Pam Houston, “How to Talk to a Hunter,” “Symphony”
Richard Bausch, “The Fireman’s Wife”

Tuesday, 10/24  Mary Gaitskill, “On Not Being a Victim”

Race

*Many interviewers when they come to talk to me, think they're being progressive by not mentioning in their stories any longer that I'm black. I tell them, 'Don't stop now. If I shot somebody you'd mention it.’*  Colin Powell

*Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war and until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation, until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes. And until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race, there is war. And until that day, the dream of lasting peace, world citizenship, rule of international morality, will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained... now everywhere is war.*  Haile Selassie, Popularized by Bob Marley in the song, War

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.*  Martin Luther King Jr.

Thursday, 10/26  Studs Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession* (excerpts)

Class and Equality

*The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.*  Anatole France:
Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on the earth. I said then and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free. Eugene V. Debs

Democracy does not guarantee equality of conditions - it only guarantees equality of opportunity. Irving Kristol

Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone. John Maynard Keynes

Capitalism and communism stand at opposite poles. The essential difference is this: the communist, seeing the rich man and his fine home, says: “No man should have so much.” The capitalist, seeing the same thing, says: “All men should have so much.” Anonymous

Tuesday, 10/31 Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto

Thursday, 11/2 Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. “Harrison Bergeron”

Current Trends

A community needs a soul if it is to become a true home for human beings. You, the people, must give it this soul. Pope John Paul II

A world community can only exist with world communication, which means something more than extensive software facilities scattered about the globe. It means common understanding, a common tradition, common ideas and common ideals. Robert M. Hutchins

America is God’s Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Israel Zangwill

As long as the differences and diversities of mankind exist, democracy must allow for compromise, for accommodation, and for the recognition of differences. Eugene McCarthy

Tuesday, 11/7 Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. “The Disuniting of America”
Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone”

Society and Responsibility

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing. Albert Einstein

This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century -- solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others. Elie Wiesel
Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator. Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander. Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC

Thursday, 11/9: Simon Robinson, “The Tragedy of Sudan”
Sam Dealey, “Caught in Darfur’s Crossfire”
William Faulkner, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

The Ties that Bind

In each family a story is playing itself out, and each family's story embodies its hope and despair. Auguste Napier

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent. John Donne

We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am a part of all that I have met. Alfred Tennyson

Tuesday, 11/14 Judith Guest, Ordinary People

Thursday 11/16 Judith Guest, Ordinary People

Nov. 20-24 Fall Break – Happy Thanksgiving

Tuesday 11/28 Kurt Vonnegut, Slapstick

Thursday, 11/30 Cubdom: The Power of Hope

Cub fans are 90% scar tissue. George Will

Do they still play the blues in Chicago
When baseball season rolls around
When the snow melts away,
Do the Cubbies still play
In their ivy-covered burial ground
When I was a boy they were my pride and joy
But now they only bring fatigue
To the home of the brave
The land of the free
And the doormat of the National League Steve Goodman

Tuesday, 12/5 Group Projects (4:00 p.m.)