CID 2301: The Human Experience

Nature and Environment/Ethics and Morality

COURSE SYLLABUS
Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: **Dr. Sharon Kowalsky**
Office Location: **Ferguson 111** (inside the Main Office for the History Department, First Floor of Ferguson Social Sciences Building)
Office Hours: **TBD** (this is when I am generally in my office and you can drop by to see me, although I encourage you to make an appointment. You can do that through email or Navigate)
Office Phone: **903-886-5928** (you can call, but I don't check the messages)
University Email Address: **Sharon.Kowalsky@etamu.edu** (This is the best way to get a hold of me. If you want to discuss something, please send me an email, and I will respond as soon as I can within my response time frame)
Preferred Form of Communication: email
Communication Response Time: within 24 hours (except on weekends)

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

CID 2301: The Human Experience introduces students to humanities-based inquiry by guiding students through an exploration of important humanistic questions across all elements of the human experience. Through the deep focus on a connecting theme, students will engage in holistic discussions of topics addressing fundamental questions about human life and human interactions, develop the skills of humanistic inquiry (including critical thinking, research, literacy skills, and communication skills), and learn to apply their knowledge to their personal, professional, and academic goals.

This course is the foundational course for the Humanities Certificate program, a grant-funded, TAMU System-wide initiative designed to create an intentional connective pathway through the core curriculum to infuse the humanities and humanities-based inquiry (critical thinking, research, communication, ethics, morality, cultural awareness, empathy, etc.) into student degree pathways and encourage students to see the relationships between larger questions of the human experience and their own lives and goals. The course is based on Transformative Texts and a Transformative Project.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

The theme for this section is Nature and Environment/Ethics and Morality. Overall, this course explores the big questions of what it means to be human, how others have addressed this question, and why it is important to think critically about our roles in the world and the actions we take. To that end, we will explore a selection of fictional and non-fictional investigations about some of the ways that human have tried to change nature, or maybe defy nature, through technology. The center of our exploration will be discussions of ways humans have sought to change humanity, and the broader social implications of such efforts. Through this exploration, we will critically examine the use of science and technology to shape human interactions, and how such big questions can relate to us, our own society, experiences, and trajectories.

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

The readings for this course are partially drawn from a system-wide list of Transformative Texts. **Transformative Texts** are books, films, artwork, music, documents, memoirs, etc. from diverse regions, cultures, ethnicities, ideologies, religions, genders--around the world and through time--that reflect the core ideals, ethics, and moralities of the human experience.

Required Readings for this section of CID2301:

Please PURCHASE through the Bookstore or from any other source:
- Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Oxford World's Classics, 2008) ISBN 978-0199537167, $7.95
- Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (Crown Random House, 2011) ISBN 978-1400052189, $10.44

Additional readings will be provided for you on D2L and are listed in the Course Schedule below or on D2L.

Student Learning Outcomes

The focus of this class is to build student skills in critical analysis and communication by developing students' ability to think critically, empathetically, and holistically about big issues and to develop, hone, and communicate their ideas about those big issues. The common student learning outcomes for this class are:

1. Critical/Integrative Thinking: Students will apply insights from the humanities (i.e., examinations of human history, culture, language, ethics, and aesthetics) to problems or questions that intersect with other areas of inquiry, including STEM and professional disciplines. (Core Outcome Alignment: Critical Thinking)

2. Communication: Students will communicate ideas effectively through writing and, where appropriate, through oral communication, visual communication, or creative performance. (Core Outcome Alignment: Communication)

3. Ethical Reasoning: Students will engage with multiple perspectives in exploring the human dimensions of real-world situations and problems. (Core Outcome Alignment: Personal Responsibility; Critical Thinking)

4. Cultural Awareness: Students will demonstrate an appreciation for social and cultural diversity while engaging in critical analysis of various forms of literary, artistic, or cultural expression. (Core Outcome Alignment: Social Responsibility; Critical Thinking)

Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed by the Transformative Project (see discussion below) presented during the Celebration of Student Learning held on the Wednesday of Exam Week, 3-5pm.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods and Assessment

This course is centered on classroom discussion of assigned works, using small group and large group discussions, with short low-stakes writing and reflection assignments that scaffold to a final Transformative Project. The Transformative Project showcases student learning and development of humanities skills, including information literacy, critical thinking, and communication. Students will read, discuss, listen, analyze, and develop an understanding of the assigned texts and their connections to their own lived experience, goals, and beliefs; conduct research; and communicate their ideas. In engaging with the core learning objectives of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and personal responsibility, students will gain a greater appreciation of the complexities of the world and their place within those complexities, and gain new skills derived from deep textual reading and analysis, critical thinking and engagement, research and information literacy, and the ability to communicate their ideas. These skills provide a key foundation for the college experience and will bolster students' employability after graduation.

To prepare for and develop the Transformative Project, students will engage in short writing, research, and oral presentations that provide a scaffolded foundation for their final project, as set out in the Course Schedule. Through reflective assignments, students will develop a project focus that sets out the large issue drawn from their study of the chosen Transformative Texts and the relevance students find to their lives and goals. They will conduct research on different approaches to that large issue to understand in a holistic sense the different perspectives on the large issue, and make arguments about how such different perspectives might shape a society's understanding of the issue. Students will prepare a product that articulates the connections between the larger issue they researched and discussed and their own lives, goals, and experiences. The final Transformative Project will be presented using Adobe Creative Campus suite of programs, allowing students creativity of expression in making the connections between their humanities inquiry and their personal experiences.

Throughout the course, discussions and assignments are geared to reinforcing the basic premises of university education and to emphasizing students' development of skills central to their college career and beyond—exposing students to new ideas, different perspectives, and the variability of the human experience; developing relationships between and among students, mentors, and faculty; reinforcing persistence and resiliency; encouraging reflection and sense of purpose; and honing reading, writing, and communication skills.

Students in this course will engage in both individual and group activities. Group assignments will depend on the work of all members of the group. It is incumbent on each student to show up and contribute to all aspects of their group's work. If there is a group assignment in class, only those students present to complete the group assignment will receive credit for it.

In the event of a campus closure, we will follow the instructions given by the university. If the university permits, cancelled class meetings may be converted to recorded lectures and/or discussion boards on D2L. If you have any concerns about class attendance or have family or work responsibilities that may interfere with your class attendance, please contact me to discuss this as soon as is practicable.

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Enrolling in this course is an implicit commitment to make class attendance a priority. If at any time you are confronted with circumstances outside the classroom that limit your ability to complete the coursework or arrive on-time to class, please let me know. I am willing to work with students to ensure that they have the best opportunity to succeed in the class. Proactive communication is the key to resolving such situations.

A Note on Electronic Devices
We will, at times, use smartphones and computers as **tools in class** to look up information, access readings, explore historical sources, engage in assessments, and examine alternate interpretations. At all other times cellular phones (and computers not being used for note taking) should be silenced and put away, lest they become **devices** used to distract and alienate us. Please do not spend our class time doing work for other classes; focus your attention on the here and now. In addition, smartphone use before and after class tends to squelch the lively and engaging classroom community I hope to build. For this reason, students are asked to put away their phones upon entering the classroom. Students who would like to spend the time between classes on their phones should do so in the hallway or lounges. Upon entering the classroom, students should be prepared to engage socially and intellectually with their fellow students and professor in an in-person format. Please join me in shaping our classroom spaces for intellectual community.

Assignments and Expectations

Details of assignments and expectations are set out here and can also be found on D2L, sometimes with greater detail.

The grade for this course is based on the amount of effort you put into the course. You can decide what effort you would like to expend and what grade you would like for that effort. Students will earn points for each activity completed, and the final grade will be based on the number of points achieved out of the total number of points possible.

Engagement
Engagement encompasses how a student interacts with the course, through attendance and participation. Showing up is one of the most important factors for success in any realm of life. This is an in-person class and your presence in class is essential for your success in the class. During our in-class discussions, we will build skills and resourcefulness that will help students better navigate not only college but also their career pathways. To gain the most benefit from our class meetings, students are expected to attend each class, arriving on time and staying through the entire period. Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. I understand that life happens and you may become sick or need to care for a family member, or that some other life experience pay prevent you, on occasion, from attending class. In such events, please communicate with me as quickly as you can, in advance if possible, so we can note your absence. If you are participating in a university-sponsored event that requires you to miss class, I need to know about that as well. If you miss class, regardless of the reason, you will need to contact a peer to identify the material you missed. In-class individual and group work cannot be made up.

Another element of your Engagement grade is class participation. In addition to showing up, success requires students to prepare for and engage in our course activities. <u>Students are expected to come to class each day prepared. This means students have read or completed the assignment for that day in advance, have brought their course materials with them, and are ready to engage in class activities in a thoughtful manner</u>. Thoughtful participation does not mean talking frequently, but rather

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demonstrating a knowledge of the material, a willingness to think critically about both the material and colleagues' comments, and a willingness to listen to and learn from others. Students are encouraged to engage not only with the professor, but with each other as appropriate. The professor will create, and students will help maintain, an intellectual classroom environment that is open to a range of opinions where we can listen to and consider others' arguments with an open mind, that provides a safe space to discuss all ideas, and where we can respect viewpoints other than our own, and learn to support our own viewpoints with evidence and examples.

The third element of the Engagement grade is group participation. The group participation grade will be based on collaboration with other members of the student's group for in-class activities and discussion, as well as group projects. At the end of the semester, students will complete a self-assessment reflecting their participation in their group's work as well as their perception of the work of the other students in their group, which will contribute to the assessment of students' group participation.

Engagement builds skills toward the learning outcomes in critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and ethical responsibility, addressing SLO1-4.

We have 30 class meetings scheduled over the course of the semester (not including the first class meeting). Attendance will be taken each day. Students may miss up to four class periods for any reason whatsoever (this is basically two weeks of work). Students earn 10 points per day for attendance (arrive on time, stay for duration of class period). Students can earn up to 10 points per day for participation (reading assignments completed, engaging in class or group discussion).

Activities
Periodically we will engage in classroom activities geared toward developing the skills to be a successful student. Students can earn up to 5 points for each activity they complete.

Reflections
A key element of this course is developing students' ability to think and reflect. To practice this skill, students will write regularly in class, and out of class, in response to a prompt. Most of these reflections will encourage students to think about the issues being discussed for the day and gather their thoughts for class discussion. Students will be assessed for their completion of the assignment and its relevance to our topics, and NOT for any opinions or perspectives they produce. These reflections are not supposed to be polished essays but rather insights into how you are thinking about the material, and the connections you are making.

Reflections focus on developing student ideas and thoughts in preparation for or in reaction to classroom engagement, and to that end support the learning outcome for critical thinking (SLO1). Students can earn up to 10 points for each Reflection.

Transformative Project
The Transformative Project is the culminating work for the semester. It should engage with the materials and issues discussed in class and show deep and thoughtful consideration of the topics. Transformative projects will be completed in small groups, using class time, and should be creative reflections of your consideration of the material. Students can earn up to 300 points for the Transformative Project, based on engagement with the issues, creativity, timeliness, and group collaboration.

Due Dates and Deadlines

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Due dates for Readings and Reflections are listed in the Course Schedule and on D2L. These are established to ensure that work is spread throughout the semester and that students are able to receive feedback on their work with a view toward continual improvement. Improvement can only occur when there is adequate time for feedback. Students are expected to submit all assignments as indicated in the assignment. To pass the class, all assignments (except in-class activities) must be completed. Late assignments will be accepted until 11:59pm on the last day of classes, must be submitted through D2L, and will be penalized, preventing the student from achieving an A or B. Students experiencing emergencies should speak with the professor immediately to make alternative arrangements for submitting assignments.

Technologies We Will Use

This semester, we will experiment with a variety of learning technologies. In addition to D2L, where you can find all course information, assignment due dates, and course schedule, you may engage with:

Adobe Creative Campus: As a student at East Texas A&M, you have FREE access to all of the programs in the Adobe Creative Campus suite, including Photoshop, Illustrator, Premier, Audition, Express, etc. You are encouraged to play around with these tools and to use them for assignments. All projects must engage with Adobe in some fashion, although students may determine how based on their comfort level and interest. The university has several Adobe tutors and Adobe Ambassadors to assist you should you wish to improve your skills and facility with the Adobe programs.

Kahoot or other Collaborative Quiz Software: We may have quizzes or other games through Kahoot. In such instances, you will get a code to join the game and will be able to use your smartphone in class to access it.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%
B = 80%-89%
C = 70%-79%
D = 60%-69%
F = 59% or Below

Grades will be determined based on the number of points possible. The number of points for each type of assignment is listed in the description of the assignment.

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COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

What	When	To Read or Do	To Submit
Unit 1: Introductions	Jan 13		
	Jan 15	"What is Water" (D2L)	
	Jan 20		
	Jan 22	"The Cave Allegory" (D2L)	Reflection #1
Unit 2: Fiction	Jan 27	Prometheus (D2L)	
	Jan 29		
	Feb 3	Frankenstein, Preface and Letters, to-31 Career Bash, 3:30-4:30	Focus2 Assignment
	Feb 5		
	Feb 10	Frankenstein, Ch 1-7, 31-81	Reflection #2
	Feb 12		
	Feb 17	Frankenstein, Ch 8-16, 81-144	Reflection #3
	Feb 19		
	Feb 24	Frankenstein, Ch 17-24, 144-223	
	Feb 26		Reflection #4
	Mar 3	Stephenson, "The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde"	
	Mar 5		Reflection #5
	SPRING BREAK		
Unit 3: Non-Fiction	Mar 17	Henrietta Lacks, Part One	
	Mar 19		
	Mar 24	Reading TBD	Reflection #6
	Mar 26		
	Mar 31	Henrietta Lacks, Part Two	
	Apr 2		Reflection #7
	Apr 7	Reading TBD	
	Apr 9		
	Apr 14	Henrietta Lacks, Part Three	Reflection #8
	Apr 16		
	Apr 21	Reading TBD	Reflection #9
	Apr 23		
	Apr 28	"The Clone Tyrone"	
	Apr 30		Reflection #10
	May 6	Learning Showcase, 3-5pm	Transformative Project

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TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:
https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements

LMS Browser Support:
https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool
https://inside.etamu.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Students are encouraged to interact with the instructor and call their attention to any problems or issues they might have over the course of the semester. Better communication equates to better student outcomes and success. The instructor can be reached according to the information at the top of this syllabus or through D2L. Students should use their university email address for all communication related to this course, and should practice good correspondence etiquette (as they should for all professional correspondence): when

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contacting your professor, refer to them by their appropriate title, identify yourself and the relevant course name/number, and clearly state your reason for contacting them. Be sure to put the course name and brief reason in the subject line of the email or offer that information at the start of the conversation. For this class, please address your instructor as Dr. Kowalsky. This course is CID 2301: The Human Experience. You can expect a response within 24 hours, during the work week (excluding the weekends). Please do not expect any responses after 10:00pm.

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced with as much advance notice as reasonably possible.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.
http://www.etamu.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette

East Texas A&M Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.
http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx

http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03
Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf

http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf

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Statement on AI Use

At East Texas A&M University we recognize that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words. AI is a powerful tool for generating text and for consolidating information. As a tool it requires that both students and faculty think through how to use it wisely and responsibly to accomplish our goals. AI is also a powerful tool for gathering the work of others and combining it, without citation, into a polished product. In this it is morally dubious.

For this course our goals are to practice critical thinking, to interpret evidence, and to grow in our understanding of the Human Experience. As a tool, AI does little to help us in these tasks. On the contrary, using AI for course assignments would undermine your learning in these areas—the learning you are paying for. For this reason, students and faculty are not authorized to use any AI software in this course. Any use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). As a student you are fully responsible for the content of any assignment you submit.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
East Texas A&M University
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

http://www.etamu.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

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For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:
http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit **www.etamu.edu/counsel**

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