



HUM 2301.05E: The Human Experience

Theme: Utopias

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Sharon Kowalsky
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences 111B
Office Hours: TBD
Office Phone: 903-886-5928 (but I don't answer the phone, so please use email)
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Preferred Form of Communication: **EMAIL**
Communication Response Time: 24-48 hours

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

HUM 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 Human Experience 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.

Theme of the course: Utopias. Over the course of the semester we will explore a variety of writings and other materials that imagine ideal societies, or envision how to improve a current society. We will

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reflect on what it means to create a good society and the different ways that people have imagined and considered what that might mean.

Transformative Project: The Transformative Project will ask students to take a theme from the course, engage in research about that topic, identify relevant sources, present an argument, and link the outcomes to an issue relevant to their own career or personal trajectory. The Transformative Project aligns with and assesses all Student Learning Outcomes for the course. The Transformative Project should engage students in the use of Adobe Creative Cloud.

Mission Statement for the Human Experience Program

- Students will explore their own agency and recognize how they are responsible for their success in their college experience, careers, and lives
- At the same time, they will contextualize, reflect on, and share their experiences and perspectives in their communities.
- In doing so, they will examine differing perspectives, which will lead to two interconnected ideas: seeing different perspectives develops empathy and Individual student voices and creativity add to larger cultural understandings of the world and the human experience.
- We will examine how “texts” transform not just individual lives but also the ways that groups of people perceive and understand the world.

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.

Readings for this section of HUM2301:

All readings will be provided on D2L as PDFs or weblinks.

During the semester, preferably in the first 2-3 weeks, each section of HUM 2301 will engage with at least one of the readings from each category:

- Thinking about learning/success
 - [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*](#) by Paulo Freire
 - [*“The Significant Learning Benefits of Getting Rid of Grades”*](#) by Susan Blum
 - [*All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*](#) by Robert Fulghum
- Perspective
 - [*Ways of Seeing*](#) by John Berger ([video](#) or [website](#))
 - [*“The Danger of a Single Story”*](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
 - [*On Photography*](#) by Susan Sontag]

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 course are:

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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, presented during the Learning Showcase held on the Wednesday of Exam Week, 3-5pm. Students will present their projects during one hour of that time and are required to attend as assigned.

This course also fulfills the Phase I requirements of the University QEP through the completion of a Competencies Pre-Reflection, a Competencies Post-Reflection, and the Focus2 Career Assessment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods and Assessment

This course will be 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 that complexity, 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 Text 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

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at the Learning Showcase using the Adobe Creative Campus suite of programs, in a format that makes the most sense to students, to allow them creativity of expression in making the connections between their humanities inquiry and their personal experiences.

Throughout the course, discussions and assignments will be 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, canceled 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.

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, Student Responsibilities, Expectations, and Tips for Success

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

Engagement

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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 may 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. 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. Thoughtful participation does not mean talking frequently, but rather 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.

Reflections

A key element of this course is developing students' ability to think and reflect. To practice this skill, students will write short reflections regularly in class, with 3 formal Reflections spread throughout the semester. 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).

Transformative Project

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The Transformative Project is the culminating work for the semester. More details regarding the parameters of this assignment will be discussed in class and posted to D2L. 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 and should be creative reflections of your consideration of the material.

Due Dates and Deadlines

Due dates for some assignments 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. 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

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade:

Engagement 20%

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Reflections	30%
Assignments	20%
Transformative Project	30%
TOTAL	100%

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Unit 1

August 20: Introductions

Activity: Adobe Graphic

August 25:

Activity: Syllabus/Course Contract

Read: TBD

August 27

In class: David Foster Wallace ["This is Water"](#)

September 1: No class (I have jury duty)

Activity: Competencies Pre-Reflection Due

September 3

Activity: Field Trip

September 8: Perspectives

Activity: Time Management

September 10

September 15: Utopia: An Introduction

Activity: Mentor Map

September 17

September 22:

Activity: Unit 1 Reflection

September 24: No class

Activity: Focus2 Assessment Due

Unit 2

September 29

Read Plato, *The Republic*

October 1

Read: Al-Farabi, *The Virtuous City*

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October 6:

Read: Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*

October 8: Fall Break, No Class

October 13

Activity: Class Registration and Building a Schedule

Read: Thomas More, *Utopia*

October 15

Read: Thomas More, *Utopia*

October 20

Read: Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun*

October 22

Read: Sir Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis*

October 27

Read: Fourier, TBD/ Thoreau, *Walden*

October 29

Read: Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

November 3: Election Day

Read: Begum Rokeya, *Sultana's Dream*

November 5

Read: H. G. Wells, *Men Like Gods*

November 10

Activity: Unit 2 Reflection

November 12: No class

Unit 3

November 17

Read: Martin Luther King, Jr "I Have a Dream"; Johnson "Great Society"

November 19

Read: Wilson "Fourteen Points"; Roosevelt "Four Freedoms"

November 24

Activity: Competencies Post-Reflection Due

November 26: No class, Thanksgiving Break

December 1

Read: TBD

December 3

Activity: Unit 3 Reflection

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Student Learning Showcase and Transformative Project Presentation: December 9, 3-5pm

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.tamuc.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, a 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 contact the professor for any and all reasons whatsoever. The more you let me know what is going on with you, the better I can help you out when necessary. Beyond the classroom, the best way to get in touch with the professor is through email. I am also available to meet

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by appointment over Zoom, which you can do through the Navigate app or through the link on D2L. Please talk to me about any concerns you might have and about any problems or issues that arise during the semester. I can be very understanding and flexible, but only if I know what is going on with you.

I commit to responding to any emails and questions within 24 hours (48 hours for Saturday and Sunday messages). I will not respond to emails after 10:00pm. In order to respond fully to you, please use proper email etiquette when communicating with me. Please address me as Dr. Kowalsky or Professor Kowalsky. Please clearly explain your issue or concern. Please conclude your email by including your full name and the course in which you are enrolled, including section number. Emails without clear identifying information (your email address is not identifying information) will be returned unanswered. Thank you for your cooperation and for helping me to best assist you.

Statement on Student Grievances

Students who have questions or concerns about the instructor's course policies or the conduct either of the instructor or a classmate should first consult with the instructor. In the event of a lack of resolution or satisfaction on the matter, the student may bring their concerns to the head of the History Department, Sharon Kowalsky (Sharon.Kowalsky@etamu.edu). If this does not result in a satisfactory conclusion to the matter, students may bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Dean of Students per procedures outlined on pp. 15-19 of the Student Guide Book.

COURSE AND 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 in advance.

University Specific Procedures

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>

ETAMU 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>

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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>

AI Use Policy

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there may be legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructor's guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

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

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

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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.

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



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>