

Honors Intellectual Traditions

Borders and Belonging

Policy Statement and Syllabus
Spring Semester, 2021 — Hybrid
Remote Meeting: Thursday 9:10-10:30am

Instructor: Dr. Paul Ketzle
Online: <http://utah.instructure.com>

Office: MHC 1201
Office Hours Th 12:30-1:30 p.m.
(By appointment)

TEXTS

Henry V, Shakespeare

Passing, Larson

Herland, Gilman

The English Patient, Ondaatje

Autobiography of Blackhawk

Plus, a course reader supplied by Instructor

FOCUS

“Forgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation.” — Ernest Renan

This Intellectual Traditions course will explore the bonds that unite individuals together into communities and define an individual’s sense of identity. What does it mean to be “a people,” and how has the answer to that question changed both within and between different cultures over time? Who is part of the community, and who is excluded? How do the boundaries we draw—figurative and literal—define us, in turn. In short, we will test the borders that define what it means to belong.

You will be discussing and writing analyses of these texts, as well as debating and working collaboratively to define the borders of our own communities. Our wide-ranging study will cover novels, stories, plays, religious works, and other art, texts, and films. We will explore not only traditional concepts of tribalism, nationalism, and colonialism, but the intersectionality of different communities of identity (gender, race, orientation) within the larger culture. Our primary focus will be on critically reading texts to understand how these ideas have developed and evolved based upon time, place, and culture, but our study will also give us opportunities to venture out into our own community and to write and think about how these ideas apply to we, “the people,” ourselves.

PARTICIPATION

Zoom Class Meetings

We will be instead using Zoom to conduct small and large group discussions on Thursday during our scheduled class time, starting on January 21st. (We may occasionally have meetings scheduled on Tuesdays during the same class time, either as a make-up or necessarily additional session. These dates will be provided as far in advance as possible to accommodate your schedules.) The general class discussions will be recorded for those who are having technical difficulties attending during this time. These sessions will be an opportunity for you all to interact with each other, share and challenge ideas, and generally create the kind of Honors community that is such a valuable part of your educational experience. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are facing any obstacles that will interfere with your ability to fully participate in this portion of the course.

Individual Meetings

Everyone is required to schedule at least one brief individual meeting with me during the first part of the semester. I will be sending out a sign-up sheet and will work to accommodate your schedules to the best of my ability. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your own goals for the class and your education, as well as any concerns or questions you might have about the material.

Discussions

In addition to our virtual simultaneous Zoom meetings, we will be working extensively through online written group discussions, with responses both to the readings and to each other. This will be another way for you to interact with your peers and, importantly, to articulate your ideas and to have them challenged. These discussions will be evaluated not so much for the *correctness* of your ideas but rather in terms of your demonstration of your comprehension and ability to thoughtfully engage with the ideas and authors. These will be evaluated on a three-point scale, with exceptional work receiving a 3, appropriate work receiving a 2, and insufficient work receiving a 1.

Behavior

What's expected of you is to contribute to the debates, discussion, and analyses that we are doing in this class. I expect you to challenge each other—and so you should expect to be challenged. I expect you to challenge me, as well, and you should never take the fact that I try to explain why I think you are wrong as any kind of insult or lack of respect. (I'll also try to make a point of explaining why I think you are right, too.) Rather than feeling disrespected when people disagree with you, recognize that we seriously argue with those we respect, otherwise we wouldn't waste our time. There's nothing wrong with disagreement, but simple disagreement will not be sufficient in this class and shouldn't be sufficient really anywhere else. Having an opinion is fine, but sharing and arguing one necessitates that you support it with reasons that can persuade a critical audience. And I'd argue that you should never be merely satisfied yourself with conclusions that you cannot defend to others.

Come prepared to discuss that week's readings. Unruly or unprofessional behavior—either in Zoom meeting or in written comments—will negatively affect this grade. Conversely, strong and enthusiastic engagement is either or both will raise it.