

Integrated Studies Syllabus Friday Synthesis

Time: One hour between 11am to 2pm
Place: See registrar for room assignment

This course is an intellectual journey you are taking together. You will live with your classmates, attend extracurricular activities, and participate in intellectual dialogue with many different professors. It is a multi-sided and multi-faceted conversation about interrelated ideas, a conversation that requires deep levels of earnest participation. The Friday sessions are the cornerstone of this process of dialogue, the main venue for your voice to be expressed and heard, and the most important time for receiving feedback about how your own thinking is developing. Each Friday we will continue to consider the big questions raised at Thursday's lunch and bring new readings to bear on each week's topics. Using a common text as a starting point, we will simultaneously consider the three streams and ask what conclusions can be drawn by examining the interrelationships between ideas. This is a discussion-based session and each class will be shaped by the students' questions and concerns. We expect you to engage in serious debate, deep thinking, and courteous dialogue because we believe it will create a conversation where we advance our understanding of ourselves as human beings.

Students will perform most successfully in the Friday synthesis if they are conversant with the ideas and concepts introduced by the streams earlier in the week. To help clarify this material, the lecturers will hold a symposium Wednesday night in the Provost Tower Library in Riepe from 7:30 to 9:30. This is an ideal time to ask questions about the readings and lectures.

Requirements:

Your grade for this portion of the course will be determined by the following: weekly writing assignments (55%); final writing portfolio (15%); group project (10%); participation and attendance (20%).

- **Weekly writing assignments:** one page (approx. 300-500 words) explaining how ONE of the streams of the course (biology, anthropology, or classics) relates to that Friday's common text. You will use concepts and methods from the week's readings as the focus for a coherent argument with original ideas, including citing (through either quotation or paraphrase) two to three specific ideas in the week's readings. To facilitate discussion, each student must submit this one-page essay before 11 pm on Thursday evening to the course Blackboard site (drop box) as a Word document (not PDF). **NO LATE ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Your lowest grade will be dropped from your average at the end of the semester.
- **Final Writing Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will create a writing portfolio drawing from your weekly essays. You will select three essays for the portfolio, each

highlighting a different stream (biology, anthropology, or classics). You will rework the essays to both improve them and to further integrate them. You will also write a cover letter explaining the connections between the three essays, including your thoughts on why you chose these essays and how they fit together. The length of this work should not exceed the length of the original assignments (excluding the cover letter). This portfolio (including the original graded essays) will be graded by a professor who has not regularly graded your Friday assignments.

- **Participation and attendance.** On Fridays, we will discuss your insights, questions, comments, and concerns. It is expected that you respond to your classmates with the sincerity, respect and attention you would like to receive. Attendance at Friday Synthesis is mandatory; unexcused missed classes will impact your grade. (There are 12 Friday classes; your participation grade will drop by 1/12 for each missed class.) In addition to joining the discussion during Friday class time, your participation grade will also depend on your involvement in the various forums for online commentary within the course Blackboard site. These activities will evolve over the course of the semester, and may include commentaries on each other's essays, commentaries on current events, and the creation of a course blog to showcase your writing online.
- **Group Project.** You will be paired with a partner for a video project on identity. Please note that this project will be due the evening of Wednesday, October 12. This is right after Fall Break, so plan accordingly. You will receive more information on the assignment and who your partner is on Friday, September 30. The Weigle Information Commons will provide you with appropriate hardware and software support, and will also run tutorials on working with iMovie on October 5 and 6 (exact times to be determined).

Required Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Center, located at 130 South 34th Street.

Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (ISBN: 0674175700)

Sue Hubbell, *Shrinking the Cat: Genetic Engineering Before We Knew About Genes* (ISBN: 0618257489)

Michael Lewis, *The Big Short* (ISBN: 039333882)

Sept. 16

No reading, Film Night: PBS Documentary, *The Journey of Man*. Screening Wednesday, September 7th in the Provost Tower Library at 7:30.

Sept. 23

Burkert, Chapters 1 and 2

Sept. 30

Burkert, Chapters 4 and 5

Oct. 7

Burkert, Chapters 6 and 7

- Oct. 14
No reading, group projects
- Oct. 21
Hubbell, Preface and Chapter 1
- Oct. 28
Hubbell, Chapters 2
- Nov. 4
Hubbell, Chapter 3
- Nov. 11
No reading, Film Night: Food Inc. (available on Penn Video Network and on reserve)
- Nov. 18
Lewis, Preface and Chapters 1-5
- Nov. 25
No class, Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 2
Lewis, Chapters 6-10, Epilogue, and Afterward
- Dec. 9
No reading, Film Night: Gattaca (available on Penn Video Network and on reserve)