

Human Being and Citizen (Huma 12400)

Winter 2021

Instructor:

Writing Specialist:

Course Description

Human Being and Citizen explores the needs and aspirations that draw human beings together in formal and informal communities and the problems that we encounter as social animals in the pursuit of human flourishing. We investigate matters of justice, the law, and leadership, and consider these together with modes of human interaction from contractual relations to friendship and kinship ties in both their legislative and affective dimensions (especially love, anger, shame, grief, and faith). We think about the role of divinity (from Greek mythology to modern Christianity) in shaping the ways our texts conceive of these topics, and we consider ideas about the formation of the self. Our readings are predominantly drawn from the western tradition—Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, Kant, among others—and these canonical texts do not go unquestioned. Rather, by entering into conversation with one another, they provide the intellectual resources for an inquiry that leads ultimately into an exploration of contemporary questions of rights, representation, and belonging.

In the fall quarter, we explored texts that conceive of, express ideals about, and articulate tensions in conceptions and practices of justice, human and divine law, and emotion. Led by our texts, we thought about rupture and continuity in varieties of social order (including families, armies, and under the rule of law). We worked on skills in assessing arguments, working with literary ideas, and developing claims and worthy argumentation about them.

In the winter quarter, HBC examines conceptions of the human good in connection with practices of the self as they pertain to virtue, belief and truth, the community, and social organization. We ask what constitutes human flourishing and what the relation is between individual self-formation and the social and political good. Texts include Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Augustine's *Confessions*, and Dante's *Inferno*.

Course Goals

This course offers opportunities to hone your skills in literary analysis and philosophical investigation. We will read texts that express sustained and well-reasoned views on our topics and call upon us to engage thoughtfully with them. Participating in class discussion helps to further your ability to engage in a scholarly way with systematic, extended thought about, e.g., what constitutes human flourishing, how practices of the self might be understood to sustain it, and about the social the social and political good. We will practice charitable yet critically engaged reading of our source texts and attempt to think through these matters together. The group homework, class presentations, and writing assignments are all geared towards improving your capacity and acuity as readers and scholarly discussants—as well, I hope, as serving to help you to build a scholarly community.

Class Meetings

During Week 1, all classes will be held on Zoom. In Week 1 and all the following weeks, all students will attend class for full 80 minutes on both Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week. This represents a departure from last quarter, when we met on Tuesdays for shorter times in smaller groups.

I hope we can hold Tuesday classes in person on even weeks (Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8) in person. I will make every effort to remind you of these in-person days. Please also make an effort to keep track of them or help each other remember. They are listed in the course schedule. Do put them in your calendars. **If you are feeling even remotely unwell, do not come to a live session.** Instead, contact me as soon as you know you will be unable to attend and we will make other arrangements for you to access the material. The 11:20 class meets in Stuart 101. The 2:40 class meets in SHFE 203.

Required Texts (available at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore)

Please purchase the translations listed below. Do not plan to use e-books or different translations for this course. Please note that the translation of Augustine's *Confessions* was not used last year in HBC, although it has been used previously. Check the translation before purchasing a used text.

Available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Crisp. Cambridge University Press. ISBN

St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0192833723.

Dante, *Inferno*, trans. Durling. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-508744-5.

Grading

20% Essay #1: Aristotle (3-5 pages)

20% Essay #2: Augustine (3-5 pages)

20% Essay #3: Dante (4-6 pages)

15% Group homework assignments (you will each complete 3 assignments as part of a group)

10% Group class presentation (each student gives one presentation as part of a group)

15% Engagement

About Essay Assignments

Last quarter, we focused on identifying claims, grounds, and warrants as a basis for analysis of arguments we read, ideas put forward in our class discussions, and as a heuristic for thinking about what is called for in a textually based argumentative essay. Within that framework, we practiced a number of ways to adduce significant and contestable claims that make creative, careful, and thoughtful use of the evidence on offer in our source materials (notably *Iliad*, *Genesis*, and *Antigone*).

This quarter, our first two essay assignments will require you to work in focused and logically sound ways with source texts that offer sustained views on topics no smaller than what it is to live well. You will be asked to engage with these texts systematically and charitably, i.e., through an understanding of the text's architecture and means of linking up ideas.

From a skills perspective, this means you will continue honing your skills in reading logically and analytically. You should plan to think in sustained ways about the topics and issues, and aim to produce writing that reflects the complexity of the source texts and your take on it in relation to the paper prompts. The third paper will invite you to put this sort of acumen to work alongside thoughtful literary analysis. You will be given writing topics and more specific instructions, including specific writing skills to focus on for each assignment, as we move through the quarter. You will be given writing prompts at least a week before assignments are due. These will be posted to our course Canvas page.

About Group Homework:

Three times during the quarter, you will be asked to meet outside of class in a small group to complete a homework assignment that you will then share with the class. As with the Symposium group work in the fall, each group will present to the class so that we may crowd-source information and analysis of important parts of our shared reading.

About Group Class Presentations:

All students are required to collaborate on one 15-20-minute in-class presentation. You will work in small groups on these presentations. Specific instructions will be made available on our course Canvas site. You will be asked to sign up for a presentation slot during the first two weeks of class and *your presentation group (or a substantial contingent) will need to attend office hours as a group to discuss your presentation plans*. We will have an advance discussion of the text and strategize about the presentation. It's great if much of the group can come, but as coordinating everyone's schedule can be difficult, a contingent from the group is fine. Choose your presentation days carefully, as missed class presentations cannot be made up.

About Engagement:

— Writing Seminars: You are required to fully participate in three writing seminars during the quarter. Our Writing Specialist, T Lacy, may assign outlines, drafts, etc. to be completed in advance of the seminar; you are required to complete any such work on time. The writing seminars will be scheduled by the Writing Specialist during the first two weeks of class. The writing component of this course carries a pass/fail grade that is independent of the grade you receive for HBC. Successful completion of the writing component is a graduation requirement.

—Attendance: Come to class. If you can't come to class, send me an email. If you miss more than 2 classes and there is not a serious reason for missing, your grade will be affected.

Come to class ready to think. Be thinking about class and its topics when you are not in class. Be responsive to your classmates and their ideas. Try to speak in class at least once every class session, whether it's on Zoom or otherwise. Make friends with your classmates. Talk to them about the nerdy things you love. Make use of Writing Tutors, one another, and your instructors to improve your writing. I am not sure what the quarter will hold in terms of making use of campus. Typically, there are many lectures, art exhibitions, theater performances, and the like that resonate with our course texts and themes. Take advantage of these when you can.

Please be sure to stay in contact via email should anything interfere with your class participation. I will not know what is going on unless you tell me. So please make me aware of tech issues, illness, personal circumstances, etc. and we will try to find workarounds and ways to adapt to circumstances where that is needed.

— Please **contact me via email** not via the Canvas messaging system.

Engagement on Zoom:

Zoom meetings will be recorded by default. Recordings of Zoom sessions will be available on Canvas, but please make every effort to be present in class.

I will consider you fully in attendance when your camera is on and you are engaged in the class discussion or group work. If tech problems prevent this, please communicate with me about that. I don't expect you to stare tragically into the lens during the whole of our Zoom sessions, but it is uncomfortable for anyone in class who is speaking to do so in front of an audience that is invisible. So it is a matter of courtesy to all if we, as a default, keep our cameras on.

We will endeavor to use one Zoom class link all quarter. I will set up a different link for office hours. Both are available Modules tab in Canvas. The meetings will be password protected. Please feel free to tune in a few minutes early if you would like; I will try to be available at least 5 minutes before the session time lest you should want to chat with me.

Try to contribute at least once per Zoom session. If you are talkative (like me) try to make sure there is space for everyone to contribute. If you want to be extra-nice, you can point it out if I'm missing the raised finger or hand of a classmate who wants to speak. If you tend to be quiet, think about using the Conversational Moves recommended for our class discussion boards when you are having live conversations too!

We all know that having a conversation on Zoom is extra stressful. It is much harder to “feel” that a comment went over well, or met interested skepticism, or for that matter was understood, when we are all tiny screen heads. Many of you will be uncomfortable talking. So be polite and extra kind to one another. Make an effort to validate and show appreciation for the contributions of others. (I hope the gestures will help with this.) Sometimes helping others speak helps you speak too!

Please be sure to stay in contact via email should anything interfere with your class participation. I will not know what is going on unless you tell me. So please make me aware of tech issues, illness, personal circumstances, etc. and we will try to find workarounds and ways to adapt to circumstances where that is needed.

Daily Reading Assignments: You are expected to have completed and thought about the assigned readings before each class period. Make a habit of formulating at least one or two interpretive issues or observations about the reading that you might want to discuss in class. (So, for example: an account of why a particular passage was confusing to you; of something in the text that surprised you; or observations about a feature of the day's readings that you think are significant for how we interpret and understand the work as a whole.) These will not be collected, but you may be called upon to share them with the class. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, consider raising questions or sharing an interesting passage—together with reasons why you find it interesting—in a discussion thread on our Canvas page or with your work group. You might also ask a classmate to do the talking for you.

— You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions to the class discussion. Your contributions should reflect a commitment to understanding and thinking critically about the

assigned readings as well as the ideas being developed in the course of class discussion. I am interested in contributions that are helpful to promoting our shared understanding of textual and thematic ideas and problems. Set your sights there, rather than on showing me that you are smart. (I already know that.) Try to contribute something to the class discussion every day, but also, be mindful that everyone in the class is working to do this. It is possible to speak both too much and too little!

- Office hours: You can sign up for office hours via the Canvas calendar. There is a Zoom link for office hours in the General Information module of our Canvas site.

You are most welcome to come to office hours to talk about the texts or to continue conversations from class discussion. Sometimes students like to come in small groups. Sometimes they like to come alone. Any arrangement is fine with me. Please, if you should need to cancel an appointment you have set, please delete the appointment so that another student may make use of the time.

I will make an effort to extend my regular office hours in the 2 weeks leading up to a paper deadline. However, I recommend signing up early if you wish to discuss your paper or ideas with me in this period as these times tend to fill up. Please note that I do not read drafts of papers during office hours. You are welcome to email me a draft of your paper in advance of a meeting, but in the meeting I will ask you what you most want to discuss. There may be a quotation use that concerns you, or trouble figuring out where to position a paragraph, or how to articulate your claim. You might wonder about a bit of reasoning you've proposed and whether it is effective. It may be that you want to brainstorm about the paper topic. I am happy to engage with you in any of these ways, among others. It is up to you to tell me specifically what you think would be most helpful.

- Cohorts: Students will be placed in cohorts (probably of 6 or 7 students) that will function as Writing Seminar and in-class work groups. We will decide during the first week of class whether to also use these groups for group homework and presentations. Whether you are involved in one class group or a few different ones, remember that everyone is capable of, and therefore expected to be, a reliable member and to contribute meaningfully to it.

Health and Well-Being

—Please follow *every* safety guideline outlined in the UChicago Health Pact and every added safety guideline that seems right to you . Please do not come to class if you so much as think you might be unwell. In all contexts, don't be persuaded by others who might seem to have more flexible ideas than you about what is safe. Groupthink risks taking everyone beyond their comfort zones on the spurious idea that everyone (else) is comfortable with what is happening. (Believe it or not, Augustine talks about this and the problems it poses for friendship, which we will read about in *Confessions* in winter quarter.)

If for any reason you are feeling uncomfortable about attending in-person class, please let me know. We all signed up for this awhile ago. Comfort levels can change. Sometimes things happen quickly and I am not always apprised of the very latest campus information. If it is scary over there, please tell me. It is my wish for us to meet in person only to the extent that it can be done with reasonable comfort. If we are not comfortable, we should not meet. If it is unsafe, we should not meet. <https://goforward.uchicago.edu/health-requirements/#healthpact>

These are stressful times. Counseling Services and UChicago Student Wellness can help. There are a range of support and other workshops on offer, as well as scheduled and drop-in therapy sessions. Therapy can be a great resource for getting to know yourself (including your work habits) better. And in our present moment, where there is so much reason to feel stressed or uncertain, these sorts of resources are all the more essential. Links are here: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/>

If you are a FLI student (first-generation, low income, or immigrant), you should know about the resources of the Center for College Student Success. It's a fantastic resource with a wide range of offerings. Check it out: <https://college.uchicago.edu/student-services/center-college-student-success>

Policies

— **Academic honesty** and integrity is fully expected. You must acknowledge other people's ideas whether you are quoting them directly or paraphrasing them. If you have questions about how or when to cite sources, please consult your instructor, Writing Specialist, or the Writing Tutors. See <https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/writing-support/ccwt/>. The writing tutors are highly trained and an invaluable resource for *all* aspects of the writing process.

Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style is recommended. The MLA provides resources here: <https://style.mla.org>

The MLA style guide and other information about citing sources is available via our campus libraries: <http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=297265&p=1984226>

Failure to credit sources of ideas or information constitutes plagiarism, which can lead to your being expelled from the university. There can also be consequences for your assignment grade and course grade. Just don't do it. Information from the College about these rules can be found here: <https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct>

— Please make every effort to **be present for our class sessions and to complete work on time**. I understand we are all being challenged to work very independently and under difficult conditions. We will do our best in these challenging times. One way you can help make good things happen is by attending class and working outside of class with vigor and integrity when you are able. I and probably all of your professors are working hard to make our collective situation as meaningful and valuable as we can.

— Please make every effort to **submit written work on time**. If you need an extension for non-medical reasons, you will need to ask at least 72 hours in advance of the deadline. Work that is late without permission (or a medical grade emergency) will be penalized for lateness by a +/- per day late. (So, a paper that would earn a B receives a B- if it is one day late; C+ if two days late, etc.)

Learning Atmosphere

— **Access to Learning**. I strive to maintain an inclusive learning environment in every sense. You are all welcome and honored in my class. If you have ADA accommodations, please let me know so we can think together about how to make things work best. I will ask you for documentation from Student Disability Services (SDS). If you are unsure whether you qualify for ADA accommodations, by all

means contact Student Disability Services at 773-702-6000, or disabilities@uchicago.edu. You can also report an access barrier, ask for services in a particular university facility, and more at <https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/accessibility/request-an-accommodation/>

If you are concerned that you may have a learning disability or are otherwise struggling with your schoolwork, Student Health and Counseling Services has an academic skills assessment program that may be able to help you sort out what is going on: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/academic-skills-assessment-program/>

— **Religious Holidays.** Please let me know if you need to miss class or adjust deadlines to accommodate religious observance. We will work something out. Please check your calendars in advance of signing up for any self-imposed deadlines (mainly, class presentations) that might interfere with such observance.

—**Diversity.** I aim to maintain a productive learning environment based on open communication, collegiality and mutual respect, and non-discrimination. I view the perspectives and backgrounds that students bring to this class as a resource, strength and benefit. I am a member of the FLI network and take matters of inclusion and equality of access to heart. Students of any gender, sexuality, physicality, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religious background, and immigration status are avidly welcome. Any suggestions you might have for promoting a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. Please let me know your preferred name and gender pronouns. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, I hope you will let me know. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of such discussions.

— **Please communicate!** If you are having tech or health or other issues that inhibit or prohibit your learning in my class, I want to know. We can try find workarounds where that is possible. I won't necessarily know there is a problem unless you tell me.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Readings are due on the dates listed

*indicates group homework to be presented in class by all student groups;

^indicates group presentation; each group will give one presentation during the quarter

Week 1

Jan. 12: Introduction to ethics and Aristotle

Jan. 14: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1

Week 2

Jan. 19: CLASS MEETS IN PERSON. *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 2-3

*Jan. 21: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 4-5 (group work on virtues due—all groups)

Writing Assignment: Essay #1 (due Feb. 5)

Week 3

Jan. 26: *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 6-7

^Jan. 28: *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 8-9 (group presentation on friendship)

Week 4

Writing Seminar #1 to take place in Week 4

Feb. 2: CLASS MEETS IN PERSON. *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10

Feb. 4: *Nicomachean Ethics* wrap up; *Confessions* Book 1

Feb. 5: Essay #1 due by 7 pm

Week 5

Feb. 11: *Confessions* Books II-III

Feb. 13: *Confessions* Books IV-V (group homework on intellectual encounters; transformation)

Week 6

Writing Seminar #2 to take place in Weeks 6-7

Feb. 16: CLASS MEETS IN PERSON. *Confessions* Books VI-VII

Writing Assignment: Essay #2 (due Feb. 26)

Feb. 18: *Confessions* Books VIII-IX (group presentation on evil and the will)

Week 7

Feb. 23: *Confessions* Book X

Feb. 25: *Inferno* Cantos 1-6

Feb. 26: Essay #2 due by 7pm

Week 8

Mar. 2: CLASS MEETS IN PERSON. *Inferno* Cantos 7-12

*Mar. 4: *Inferno* Cantos 13-20 (group homework on contrapasso due—all groups)

Week 9

Writing Seminar #3 to take place in weeks 9-10

Mar. 9: *Inferno* Cantos 21-26

Writing Assignment: Essay #3 (due Mar. 16)

^Mar. 11: **Last day of class.** *Inferno* Cantos 27-34 (group presentation)

Week 10

Mar. 15: Essay #3 due by 7 pm