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# Honors Humanities

## World History and Philosophy

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Daniel Julian  
julian@wlwv.k12.or.us / juliansclass@gmail.com  
503-673-7815 ext. 4856  
A104  
www.wlhs.wlww.k12.or.us/Page/8797

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### Overview

Welcome to Honors Humanities. While not strictly a philosophy class, we will touch on a number of philosophical concepts, issues, and controversies, as well as create (and attempt to resolve) a few controversies of our own. We will spend first semester attempting to define (literally and figuratively) life and its many implications. During second semester, we will study specific schools of philosophy through a variety of writers, thinkers, and activists, ranging from the esoteric abstraction to practical application. The culmination of our course of study will be projects created by each student that respond to the essential philosophical question that the class will generate and agree upon. These responses will be presented at Humanities Night in May, a mandatory class event that is open to the public and will count for the majority of your second semester grade.

My hope is that you will come into Humanities with an open and inquisitive mind, ready to both learn and teach. This is a student-driven, open-ended discussion, and as such will be very different from your other classes at West Linn High School. You will be challenged, but I believe that the challenge will be well worth the results.

### Goals

Students will be able to:

- Make connections between a critical approach to the construction of knowledge, the academic disciplines, and the wider world
- Develop an awareness of how individuals and communities construct knowledge and how this is critically examined
- Develop an interest in the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives and an awareness of personal and ideological assumptions
- Critically reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, leading to more thoughtful, responsible and purposeful lives
- Understand that knowledge brings responsibility which leads to commitment and action

Further to these, it is expected that by the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the various kinds of justifications used to support knowledge claims
- Formulate, evaluate and attempt to answer knowledge questions
- Examine how academic disciplines/areas of knowledge generate and shape knowledge
- Understand the roles played by ways of knowing in the construction of shared and personal knowledge
- Explore links between knowledge claims, knowledge questions, ways of knowing and areas of knowledge
- Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of different perspectives and be able to relate these to one's own perspective
- Explore real-life/contemporary issues from a philosophical perspective

### Preparation

Every day, you will have with you, out and ready to use at the beginning of the period:

- Your composition book or spiral
- Writing utensils
- The text we are reading
- Any homework or assignment from the previous class
- A folder, binder, or some other system for keeping your work organized

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**PRESENTATION NIGHT:  
THURSDAY, MAY 24, 6:30-8:30**

### Semester 1 calendar

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#### Week 1 | Intro

An overview of the school year, with a focus on the question: What is reality?

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#### Week 2 | Theory of Knowledge

How do philosophers determine what constitutes knowledge, and how?

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#### Weeks 3-8 | Biopolitics

We will attempt to define "life," whether or not the abstract concept of human rights can exist in a practical world, and the consequences answering such a question.

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#### Weeks 9-17 | Identity

We will look at a variety of different identity markers through the lens of social and cultural anthropology, using race, gender, sexuality, reproductive issues, language, and technology.

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#### Week 18 | The Question

We will decide as a class on the question which will form the focus of your Presentation.

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#### Week 19 | Semester 1 Final

Our semester ends with a self-reflection, a personal creed statement, and we will decide on the Question for our Semester 2 work.

## Expectations

- 1) **Please be responsible for yourself and for your own learning. Own your learning.** You are responsible for your successes as well as your failures. Celebrating your achievements means you are impressed with adequacy, and blaming others or looking for excuses wastes time. There is no ctrl+z in life.
- 2) **Please respect yourself, your classmates, our room, the curriculum, and me.** You know what obnoxious behavior looks like. It is a sad plea for attention and we will all feel sorry for you if you do it.
- 3) **Don't plagiarize.** The penalty for plagiarism is a zero for the assignment and a conversation with you, me, and your parent or guardian. We'll use the WLHS Honor Code to address any further concerns.
- 4) **We will have assigned seats.** These will not be permanent, but I reserve the right to remix the class as needed for maximum educational effectiveness.
- 5) **Late work policy:** I don't have one because I don't accept it.\*
  - a) **Absences and the late work policy:** You have two school days to make up any missed work from an absence. I count each day that school is in session as a "day" regardless of whether your class met that day or not. After two days, I will not accept your work. Tests will be made up within a week.
  - b) **Deadline extension policy:** Because our ultimate goals are quality work and maximum learning, extensions are sometimes necessary. If you need extra time for a major assignment, talk to me **before** the due date. I'm *usually* flexible.
  - c) **Make-up policy:** I don't accept late work, but I *do* allow students to recover **partial** points from **major assignments** by doing makeup work that is connected to our current learning. It is best for you to come to me with an idea, but I am happy to collaborate with you to come up with something that replicates the rigor and content connections necessary to address missed work.
- 6) **Digital technology in class:**
  - a) **Cell phones:** You should not have your cell phone out in class. You are either engaged and learning or you are not. I will not catch you every time you use your devices and I will not try. But I will also not extend myself very far for a student who is not engaged in the class. Remember: *own your learning*.
  - b) **Research and Wikipedia:** The internet is an invaluable tool, but searching well still takes time and effort. You have to read extensively to be informed. In my opinion Wikipedia is *starting* place, but should never be a *starting and ending* place. Wikipedia, SparkNotes or the internet in general should never be a replacement for reading an assigned text.
  - c) **Grades online:** I regularly update grades online, almost always at least once a week. I grade papers in the order in which I receive them.
- 7) **Class website.** We will use Google Classroom for all assignments and announcements. Please check regularly, especially if you miss class.
- 8) **Food and drink.** No food in the classroom at any time, and only drinks in a sealable container. If you have a medical concern, please see me.
- 9) **Grading:** I expect you to get an A in this course because it is a student-driven, student-centered class. If you don't get an A, it's because you don't want one. With that in mind, your participation will have a massive impact on your final grade. The breakdown is *roughly* along these lines:
  - a) **Homework/Classwork:** 20% of your total grade. These are usually in-class responses and may not be made up. You either do it or you don't.
  - b) **Discussion:** 25% of your total grade. As a discussion-based class, you must contribute positively to the conversation.
  - c) **Tests/Essays/Major projects:** 55% of your total grade. Almost exclusively end-of-unit and end-of-term assignments.

## Semester 2 calendar

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### Weeks 1-3 | Differences in Philosophy

We will begin our investigation of philosophy through the lenses of Eastern and Western thought using the novel *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse.

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### Weeks 4-6 | Philosophy of Science

We will consider the implications, uses, and limitations of science, with a focus on reason and logic.

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### Weeks 7-8 | Language and Literature

We will investigate the uses and abuses of language through the study of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's version of the play *Servant of Two Masters*.

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### Weeks 9-15 | Philosophy

We will study a wide variety of philosophers and schools of thought using Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* as our anchor text. Topics include Greeks, Medieval, Existentialist, and Contemporary philosophy.

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### Week 16 | Presentation Week

It all comes down to this ...

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### Week 17 | Ferris Bueller's Day Off

Post-presentations, we take our learning for the whole year and use it to consider the greatest philosophical text of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### Week 18 | Final reflections

Wrapping up the year, we will look back to see how much we've learned, how much we've grown, and how much (according to Aristotle), we still don't know.

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### Week 19 | Final week for juniors

No juniors this year, so I get a week off!

\* The semester 2 calendar is subject to change based on the needs of the individual class (the two classes are not necessarily tied to each other). Unless there is significant change needed, the core topics of study will remain the same.

Google Classroom code: \_\_\_\_\_