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English 101: Family of Man

When people refer to the “family of man” or “the universal family,” what do they mean? What are accepted rules of behavior and conduct for individuals so that they are accepted as members of the universal family? What are some of the writings and philosophies that have created our societies, influenced us as individuals, and set the cultural tone through the ages, thereby uniting the universal family? This Great Books course will explore via a variety of texts some of these very complicated questions and analyze how we as individuals are affected in our own personal behaviors and philosophies by the structure and mores of the “universal family” surrounding us.

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In this course students practice strategies for selecting and focusing on a topic; collecting ideas and materials for that topic; shaping and organizing that material; developing supporting ideas; revising these ideas to achieve sharper focus, fuller development, more coherent development, and more emphatic expression; and editing texts to prepare them for public reading. Emphasis is on individual expression in paragraph and essay form, including correct grammar and sentence structure appropriate to an academic audience, and on responding critically and in writing to classic literary texts.

This is a Great Books course, which means, among other things, that it is a class where students are expected to do intensive reading, critical thinking, and focused writing. Each Great Books course devotes at least half of its readings to works from a list of “the best that has been thought and said,” or in other words, great classical texts from a wide variety of authors and time periods. Great Books enhances reading comprehension by developing the ability to read intentionally for understanding

and complex conceptual meanings, thereby creating a fuller understanding of the written word, both as a reader and a writer.

Theme

The theme of this course is “the family of man”: its creation and its influence on the individual. When people use the terms “family of man” or the “universal family,” what do they mean? Where does individuality fit within the universal family of man as a whole or collective? Is the individual a threat to the whole, or vice versa? How do the rules and mores of “family” get established? What are accepted rules of behavior and conduct for individuals so that they are accepted as members of the universal family? As individuals, how are we affected by the rules governing the “family”? How does one obtain and maintain power in this family? What are some of the writings and philosophies that have created our societies, influenced us as individuals, and set the cultural tone through the ages, thereby uniting the universal family? This Great Books course will explore these very complicated questions and analyze how we as individuals are affected in our own behavior and attitudes by the structure and mores of the “universal family” that surrounds us.

The “family” concept can exist in many different forms. It can exist on a large scale or a small scale—it can be the nuclear family (mother, father, children), the extended family (aunts, uncles, grandparents), or the broader idea of the “family of man” (the human race itself). We are going to write on and discuss in class important written texts that relate to the concept of the family on a large scale, which we will call “the universal family of man.” As in smaller family units, the family of man has rules, mores, and cultural dictates that lend structure to the unit, give it focus and cohesiveness. Without rules and structure, the entity cannot stand and chaos will ensue. If a nuclear family unit is dysfunctional or unhealthy, the individuals within it often become dysfunctional or unhealthy themselves. The same concepts are seen on the broader scale of the universal family.

In this course we will explore these concepts and how they relate to the individual. We will explore what books, philosophies, and mores have gone into creating societies. We will examine the driving politics and problems within society throughout the ages and in several different cultures, and we will see how the conflict of being an individual within the collective whole of the universal family has always either moved a society forward, or brought it to its knees. In the context of the universal family, it is vital to contemplate where the individual (and individuality) fit into this universal family as a whole.

Like all families, the “universal family” has rules and roles for its members. In modern psychology there is a theory that within our own personal families, we each play a role. The role could be the peacekeeper, the middle child, the troublemaker, the spoiled one, the oldest, the caretaker, the aggressor, etc. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with our unspoken “assigned” role, and sometimes something dramatic occurs to place us in a new role in the family structure. The same concept of “roles” occurs in the societal structure; that is, the makeup the universal family. Individuals and groups are assigned roles within the society, ranging from economic designations to racial, religious, or regional ones, and each one has a role that can define or confine them in that place. Large groups (which can be made up of countries, cities, regions, etc.) or smaller groups (powerful “clubs,” specific collections of people banding together to maintain or facilitate change, organizations of people with a particular economic or political status, etc.) all affect the rules that govern society, and therefore affect us as individuals trying to operate within the “family” structure.

Course Readings

Required Texts

- Jacobus, Lee A. *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. 7th edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2006
- Lunsford, Andrea A. *The Everyday Writer*. 3rd edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2005
- A good college-level dictionary

Individual Readings

Most of the readings in the course (discussed below) can be found in Jacobus' *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*, but any others will be on hold in the library.

Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (part of *The Republic*)

Lao Tzu, *Tao-te Ching*

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Origin of Civil Society"

Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

Thomas More, *Utopia*

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Education of Children"

Frederick Douglass, (excerpt of) *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

Carl Jung, "The Personal and the Collective Unconscious"

Francis Bacon, "The Four Idols"

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence

J. S. Mill, "On Liberty" and "The Subjection of Women"

Sophocles, *Antigone*

There is no doubt that the reading list for this 101 course is challenging, but it is not prohibitively so for students, nor is the list made up of texts that students find uninteresting. It is naive to think that upon the first viewing of the reading list students will leap up with pleasure at the thought of reading Plato, Machiavelli, and Jefferson, much less write about them, but I have found that once we begin to dive in and unravel the texts, the students are generally fascinated by the relevance of these "old" writings to their current, everyday lives.

The reading list does create an intense semester both in reading and in writing for the instructor and the students. It is a great deal of reading for the students in the class. I make it clear from the beginning of the semester that keeping up with the reading is vital to the students' success. As the instructor, I also try to leave a bit of flex room in my own semester schedule to drop a reading or two if I find that our pace has been consistent but not fast enough to get successfully through all readings. "Successfully" is the key here. Having the students fully understand the broad concepts in each essay, and giving them time to write on them in relation to society and/or their own lives is more important than plowing through the readings because they are on the list.

Challenges

Here I will discuss a few of the main challenges that I have encountered in teaching these texts, and some solutions in using such texts in the classroom.

Challenge 1: Close Reading

In order to get students to read beyond just skimming the texts, from day one I educate them on how to read closely, what it means to unravel a text, and to think about the concepts they are being exposed to in the text in relation to themselves and to society as a whole. This is sometimes a bit difficult in the beginning, since many first-year students are not trained to read closely, but I have found that giving them one or two points to focus on in the text, asking them to decide and clarify for themselves how they feel about the point, and being ready to discuss it in class helps them focus on the reading itself.

Also, once the students are given a writing assignment that must relate to the reading by using appropriate quotes, and in which they must clearly express their own views, they become much more adept at pulling out information that is relevant and useful to them. Another challenge I do sometimes find in close reading is patience—and by this I mean student patience in trying to glean meaning from complex readings. It takes time to read carefully and with awareness. Continually reinforcing the idea (both verbally and through class exercises) that reading with awareness and purpose is different than simply browsing through the assigned pages, and that it is a skill one hones, seems to help the students have patience with themselves and the readings.

Challenge 2: The Difficulty of the Readings

Upon first viewing the reading list for this course, an instructor may feel that it is too overwhelming and difficult for students; I think this is a mistake. The readings on the list have challenges and they are complex. The students are not only being asked to read these works, but also to contemplate how they affect the “family of man,” and how they themselves as individuals feel about the ideas expressed within the essays. The students are required to express themselves in written analysis and in verbal class discussions. As long as the instructor has prepared a strong lecture, has established clear goals for group discussions, and has created germane writing assignments, the students’ ability to interact with the texts is usually successful. I have found, much to my delight, that once we fully understand the concepts within a particular essay, the students take great pride in their depth of understanding and, as the semester progresses, they start to see the relationships between the writings and the course theme and they often bring up these connections in class discussions.

Two Brief Examples: Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” and Machiavelli’s The Prince

Upon first assigning Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” I felt that the students were a bit overwhelmed by both the content and the style of the reading. I asked them to read it for class. Instead of discussing what they read immediately, I gave a lecture upon it, and then had them go back and reread it for the next session. During the next class period, armed with the rereading, the information from my lecture, and the questions I asked them to specifically think about, they were able to break down the ideas and we had a stimulating group discussion next class session. The discussion went in many directions, from how media, film, and TV are very much like watching the shadows on the cave wall, to the dangers of blind acceptance of what one is told by those in power, to how the college learning experience is like exiting the cave and the difficulties it can cause in one’s personal life when students see “shadows” for what they are, and those around them may not. We

also discussed whether or not exiting the cave, becoming more knowledgeable as an individual, makes you an asset or a danger to society. After full discussions, we begin drafting an essay in class, later doing a peer review, and a final rewrite. If you have time, showing the movie “The Truman Show,” with Jim Carey is a useful modern way to explore the overall concept of the cave in a “pop” culture approach, and it allows students to practice using visual concepts and written texts to form a written opinion.

Another way I try to make the readings “relevant” to the student’s lives is to bring in magazine, newspaper, and/or journal articles that reference what we may be reading at a given moment. Each semester I run a library search and find different articles that are pertinent or that mention concepts in our readings. After reading Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, we read an article that compared Tony Soprano of the HBO show *The Sopranos* to Machiavelli’s prince. We watched a brief bit of the program and discussed Machiavelli and the Soprano character, and debated whether he truly was a “Machiavellian” character as the article stated. Also, using Machiavelli, we look at Tupac Shakur and his use of “Mackavelli” as his nickname while in prison. These points lead to interesting discussions about using references without fully understanding the concepts first. To compare Tony Soprano to Machiavelli is interesting, but only if you truly understand the goals that Machiavelli is outlining to his prince in order to maintain power. Reading both *The Prince* and outside sources allows us to ruminate on culture and the “family of man” structures—who has power, who doesn’t, and how one gets power.

I realize that the readings chosen are not familiar to many of the students, but many of them are texts that students will most likely run into again during their college career. In general, I try to teach the concepts of each text broadly, with a clear, concise overview. Attempting to teach each reading in exhaustive detail is not the purpose here; giving a clear, conceptual overview is the purpose so that the students can contemplate the ideas in the readings, address them in writing, and have clear familiarity with the concepts when they are confronted with them again, allowing them to go even deeper next time.

Course Objectives

In this class we will explore some of the great philosophical texts to examine concepts that go into the creation of the family of man. Most importantly, we will learn to critically examine the assigned authors’ ideas and to respond to them in academic writing style. The primary goals in this course are to (1) develop the ability to accurately discern meaning in a text, (2) to critically examine the ideas within a text in order to form a reasoned, informed judgment, and most importantly (3) to be able to interact with a text in a written essay, writing in strong academic style, expressing our own thoughts and perceptions regarding the readings with clarity, forethought, and proper structure.

The principal objective is to improve and hone students’ writing skills. This includes developing good study habits; time management; the ability to read and formulate critical views on readings; and the ability to demonstrate mastery of writing techniques, including proper grammar, idea development, coherence, and adherence to academic conventions and expectations. Other important objectives are the cultivation of a conscious concern for using language accurately and aesthetically, and the recognition of various audiences and writing situations and the ability to skillfully address them.

In this course students will practice strategies for selecting and focusing on a topic; collecting ideas and materials for that topic; shaping and organizing that material; developing supporting ideas; revising these ideas to achieve sharper focus, fuller development, more coherent development, and more emphatic expression; and editing texts to prepare them for public reading. Emphasis is on individual expression in paragraph and essay form, including correct grammar and sentence structure

appropriate to an academic audience, and on responding critically and in writing to classic literary texts. These objectives are listed individually below.

Overall Objectives

- To make a point and concretely support it in writing
- To express ideas in clear, connected sentences
- To write well-organized, fully developed, coherent paragraphs
- To enhance critical reading, thinking, and writing abilities
- To sharpen the ability to read and appreciate great textual works
- To explore the philosophical concepts which over time have created the rules and mores which the “family of man” follows, and which have influenced how individuals operate and think

Organization and Development

- To focus an experience or a general topic to arrive at a limited topic to be expressed in writing
- To properly plan a paragraph
- To furnish supporting details in order to develop the controlling idea
- To avoid unnecessary digressions from the central idea
- To use transitions to show relationships between ideas
- To maintain consistent point of view
- To correctly analyze one’s own writing
- To apply the principles of organization to develop a full-length essay

Grammar and Revision

- To be able to edit one’s own writing in standard, academic English sentences
- To be able to apply and understand the conventions of manuscript form (i.e., indenting the first line of each paragraph, using margins properly, etc.)
- To be able to distinguish singular and plural noun forms
- To use correct pronoun forms
- To understand and apply the conventions of punctuation
- To write complete, coherent sentences, avoiding run-ons and sentence fragments
- To be able to maintain consistency in verb tense
- To correct grammatical errors

- To avoid abbreviations
- To spell words correctly

Grading

Graded class essays (6)	36 points—drafts, rewrites, final version typed
Practice exit essays (5)	25 points—written in class
Midterm exam	30 points—3 essay questions based on readings
Final exit essay exam	6 points—you must pass this final essay exam to pass the class
Attendance	32 points—1 point each class, 2 points a week/16 weeks
Quizzes	11 points

Note: Practice exit exams are practice versions of the final exit essay exam. We have several practice exits because you *must pass the actual final exit essay exam in order to pass this class*. Generally, I try to give five practice exit essays to give you as many chances as possible to hone your timed writing skills so you are ready for the final exit essay at the end of the semester.

Syllabus

Week 1	Introduction to class Syllabus Read Plato, “Allegory of the Cave”
Week 2	Discuss Plato Begin Essay 1 (on Plato) Homework for next week: Read Lao Tzu, <i>Tao-te Ching</i> ; bring in rough draft of Essay 1 (typed for peer review in class)
Week 3	Discuss Lao Tzu (and as compared to Plato) Peer review of Essay 1 Homework: Read Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>
Week 4	Essay 1 due Discuss Machiavelli (relate to Plato and Lao Tzu’s conceptions of individual, society, and the leader) Begin Essay 2 Homework: Finish <i>The Prince</i> ; continue to develop Essay 2
Week 5	Essay 2 due Complete Plato/Lao Tzu/Machiavelli discussion Homework: Read Rousseau, “The Origin of Civil Society” Begin discussion on Rousseau Homework: Essay 3 (typed rough draft brought to class for peer review)

Week 6	Peer review of Essay 3 Discuss Rousseau Homework: Read Karl Marx, <i>Communist Manifesto</i>
Week 7	Essay 3 due Discuss Marx Homework: Read Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i>
Week 8	MIDTERM EXAM Discuss Thomas More Homework: Read Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i>
Week 9	Discuss <i>King Lear</i> Homework: Begin Essay 4
Week 10	Essay 4 due Finish <i>King Lear</i> Homework: Read Montaigne, “Of the Education of Children”; and Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> (excerpt)
Week 11	Discuss Montaigne and Douglass Homework: Read Jung, “The Personal and the Collective Unconscious”; and Bacon, “The Four Idols”
Week 12	Discuss Jung and Bacon Begin Essay 5 Homework: Bring typed rough draft of Essay 5; read Jefferson, Declaration of Independence; and J.S. Mill, “On Liberty” and “The Subjection of Women”
Week 13	Peer review of Essay 5 Discuss Jefferson and Mill Essay 5 due Homework: Begin Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i>
Week 14	Begin discussion on Sophocles Begin Essay 6 (final paper)
Week 15	Discuss Sophocles
Week 16	ESSAY 6 (FINAL PAPER) DUE Wrap-up discussion

Sample Questions for Study and Discussion

Note: Often the discussion topics and the writing prompts intersect. Other questions and issues will arise during the semester, and these can be expanded and addressed as they appear. The following are very general guidelines for the direction of both in-class discussions and for written essays.

Set 1

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Lao Tzu, *Tao-te Ching*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Origin of Civil Society"

Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (part of *The Republic*)

Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

Thomas More, *Utopia*

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

1. When people refer to the "family of man" or the "universal family," what do they mean? Where do women, minorities, and immigrants fit in?
2. How does one, or how should one, maintain power to keep the "family" structure together?
3. According to the various authors, what makes a "good" or successful leader? How should he/she relate to society as a whole?
4. How does each writer view human nature, and how does that affect how society is structured?
5. What is the role of the military in the state Lao Tzu praises? Machiavelli?
6. Is Plato's concept of a philosopher-king realistic in modern society? Could one exist? What about Machiavelli's concept of the prince? Is it realistic? Could one exist? What are the implications for the societal structure of following each of these types of rulers, and how would each member of society be affected?
7. How or why can the symbolic journey out of Plato's cave threaten a society, or a family structure?
8. What is the relationship between the individual and his/her economic circumstances and the State?
9. Compare how societies can be philosophically constructed.
10. What does it take for a "ruler" (or the head of the family) to be successful, and what role does the leader play as compared to the role the members (or the general masses) play in the operation of a strong, healthy society?
11. In *King Lear*, which characters exhibit Machiavellian tendencies? How?
12. Where does competition fit in a healthy (or unhealthy) society?

13. What would a perfect society be like? Has a truly utopian society ever existed?

Set 2

Michel de Montaigne, “Of the Education of Children”

Note: Montaigne makes many allusions to things the students may not be familiar with, and I suggest giving them a summary of what he refers to so the class has a general idea about them, and will not focus so much on the arcane references, but more on the message.

Frederick Douglass, (excerpt of) *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

1. How is one educated to be a civilian? As a “male” citizen? As a “female” citizen?
2. Are individual “roles” in the universal family conditioned or affected by the educational environment, or lack of it, and how?
3. What are the dangers, benefits, and disadvantages of “education”?
4. Montaigne’s view of how a child should be educated (and therefore have success and power within the society) is primarily for a male child from a wealthy family. How does that view of education affect the society and its members as a whole? What are the benefits? What are the dangers of educating individuals this way? What role do women, minorities, or the poor have in his view?
5. What role does “schooling” play in the development of a virtuous life? If one is trained to live a virtuous life, does that equate to being a good “family” member, i.e., a citizen? Why or why not? What role does education play in the development of a good citizenry, and is it important?
6. Explore the idea that “education” may be a conditioning process that occurs in our personal “families” and in the universal family, allowing those educated to function properly within our specific society.

Set 3

Carl Jung, “The Personal and the Collective Unconscious”

Francis Bacon, “The Four Idols”

1. How do the idols create illusions? And how do the illusions affect how we operate with one another and in our societies?
2. Consider the ramifications of a “collective” unconscious on our societal development.
3. Does the unconscious mind discussed by Jung affect how we create our “universal family” and dictate what is or is not acceptable?
4. What do societal rules and roles mean for minorities like African-Americans and immigrants within the “universal family”? What roles are they to play in society? How do they change (or can they change) the roles or expectations assigned to them?

5. Are there inner forces to creating structure and unity within the family of man, or is it purely an outward construction?

Set 4

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence

J. S. Mill, "On Liberty"

1. How Machiavellian is the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
2. Relate the Declaration of Independence to one of the readings in set 1.
3. How has this document "created" American society, or created an American sense of "individuality" and "citizenry"?
4. Lao Tzu, Machiavelli, Plato, and Jefferson all have different concepts of what makes a successful ruler, or head of the family. How do the context and the time in which they were writing affect their views of the ruler or "head of the family"?
5. Reading and education became a pathway to freedom for Douglass. In what way can you relate Plato's journey out of the cave to Douglass's striving for knowledge? Or Jefferson's writing the Declaration of Independence?

Set 5

Sophocles, *Antigone*

J. S. Mill, "The Subjection of Women"

1. What does Ismene mean when she says, "We are only women; we can't fight with men"? How does this statement relate to Antigone's saying her crime is holy? What is the implication?
2. How does gender bias affect Creon's decision to stand by his original decree? Why does he include Ismene in the sentence?
3. Discuss the attitudes expressed about women and their place in society. How does their "place" affect society as a whole? How does it affect their individual abilities to participate in society?
4. According to Mill, what good would come for all of society if women were equal?

Class Guidelines

Teaching Methods

I teach by mixing lectures with workshop writing exercises, class debates and discussions, and occasionally, in-class group mini-projects. Being prepared for class is important not only for your own learning process, but also because if you are not ready for class, it will reflect on your writing, and inhibit your ability to participate as a thinking, contributing member of the class. Being ill-

prepared will reflect negatively on your progress in class and will affect your overall grade. Writing is not done in a vacuum—we often work together to create and discuss. If you are not ready to work, you are not ready to learn.

Class Atmosphere

Writing is a blend of independent effort and utilizing the observational skills of others. In this class, I strive to create a writing community based on creativity, respect, and fun. Each one of us has something different to bring to the table: different skills and different challenges. In our writing community, sometimes we will work independently, and sometimes we will work together analyzing and editing each other's writing. My goal is always to create a class that balances the individual work effort and the group effort.

The college is a wonderfully diverse place. On any given day in our halls, you can run into people from all corners of the globe, see nontraditional students, and meet people from very different backgrounds than your own. This variety makes learning all the more interesting, but it can also lead to conflicting opinions. In our community of writers, there will be different types of learners, different paces of learning, and sometimes radically opposing opinions. Respect is the key to building a strong community and class. Listen respectfully when other students are speaking. The Golden Rule always applies—do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Attendance

To become a good writer takes practice, and learning to write for an academic audience also takes time and practice. If you are not willing to put in the time, it will reflect on your progress, which will reflect on your grade. Attendance is vital in a writing classes. If you are not there, the rest of the community misses you and you do yourself a disservice in your learning progress. You also lose points toward your overall grade when you miss class.

If you know in advance that you must miss a class, let me know as soon as possible. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to inquire about missed activities and assignments. I strongly suggest you exchange phone numbers or e-mail addresses with a fellow student or two so you can find out what you may have missed in class.

Time Expectations

Class is held twice a week, from 9:30 am to 10:50 am, Monday and Wednesday (approximately 3 hours per week). In order to succeed in this class, you must plan to come prepared to *every* class, which means closely reading the assigned material, completing any assignments, and being ready to participate in class discussions. A minimum of 6 to 10 hours of work outside of class is expected.

This is an active course, requiring ongoing commitment from both students and instructor. This is not a course in which you can wait until the last minute to do the work and still expect to do well. In order to become a better writer, you must commit to doing the work. It will take time beyond what we do in class. You must set aside time consistently during the week to do your reading, writing, and other exercise homework in order to get the most out of class. Do not expect to progress as a writer if you are not putting in the time.

Late Work Submission

In order to treat all students fairly, I cannot accept late papers beyond the class period they are due unless *prior* approval has been given by me to submit the work at a later time. In addition, if projects are turned in late with approval, I will mark them down one for lateness. Any approved late work

must have written on the top “Late Submission” and the name of the assignment. I have too many papers to keep track of to monitor what you are turning in late. *Be aware:* only legitimate reasons will be accepted for approval to turn in a late assignment.

Academic Guidelines for Homework

All essays submitted for grading, called final drafts, must be typed and submitted with a full array of process writing (pre-writing activities and rough drafts).

The final drafts of all essays must be typed if the assignment designates it, and must follow these conventions (these guidelines also hold true for handwritten work submitted in class):

- Document will have your name, class title, assignment name, and date
- Document will have one-inch margins all around and be double-spaced (if typed)
- Typeface should be no larger than 12-point (if it is a typed assignment; otherwise it should be neatly written)
- Copies should be clean and free of all editing marks
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors

Conferences

Time permitting, I would like to meet with each of you individually at least once during the term, usually around midterm. Your presence at the appointment will count toward the attendance portion of your grade.

Scholastic Conduct

Any dishonest academic behavior, including a dishonest representation of effort (copying, plagiarizing, cheating, having another do your work, etc.), will result in an immediate failing grade. As a general rule of thumb, if you think that what you are writing about *might* be inappropriate, it probably is, and you should pick another topic.