**HUMS 065: Education and the Life Worth Living**

MW 9-10:15am

Matt Croasmun, matthew.croasmun@yale.edu | 203-215-9362 (mobile)

Office Hours by Appointment at: [croasmun.youcanbook.me](https://croasmun.youcanbook.me/)

**Course Description**

What is an education *for?* What does it have to do with real life—not just any life, but a life worth living? We will explore these questions through engagement with the visions of five very different ways of imagining the good life and, therefore, of imagining education: the traditions of Confucianism and Christianity and three diverse modern thinkers. By the end, students will be prepared to ask the question of the good life and to put that question at the heart of their college education.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

All written assignments should be submitted via the Canvas assignment tool. Late papers will receive a grade reduction of one step (e.g., from A- to B+) for each day or part of a day that they are late.

1. *One 1000-word (maximum) paper analyzing an ancient tradition’s account of the human being and of education*. On this tradition’s account: (1) What is a human being? (2) What is a flourishing human being––i.e., What is a life worth living? (3) What is an education for and what ought it to look like––i.e., How does an education contribute to the flourishing of a human being? Finally, in your encounter with this tradition, what have you learned about what *you* believe a human being is, what it takes for a human being to flourish, and what sort of education *you’d* need to flourish? **Due October 1 or October 22 by 11:59pm.** (20 percent of final grade)
2. *One 1000-word (maximum) paper analyzing a modern author’s account of the human being and of education*. On this author’s account: (1) What is a human being? (2) What is a flourishing human being––i.e., What is a life worth living? (3) What is an education for and what ought it to look like––i.e., How does an education contribute to the flourishing of a human being? Finally, in your encounter with this author, what have you learned about what *you* believe a human being is, what it takes for a human being to flourish, and what sort of education *you’d* need to flourish? **Due October 29, November 5, November 12, November 19 by 11:59pm.** (20 percent of final grade)
3. *Peer review of drafts of classmates’ final papers, online and in person* **November 29, December 1, December 6, and December 8.** (10 percent of final grade)
4. *1250 word (maximum) paper outlining what sort of person you want to become and how your college education will help you become that person*. **First** **drafts due November 27**. **Final drafts** **due December 16 by 5:00pm.** (30 percent of final grade)
5. One purpose of a seminar like this one is to provide the opportunity for dialogical learning, not only between students and faculty, but also among students. Consequently, the quality of your participation in class greatly influences the relative success or failure of this course. Accordingly, your participation will be assessed. (20 percent of final grade) But since the goal is a flourishing seminar, not a competition for “participation points,” participation cannot be reduced to “saying smart things frequently.” Please put some thought into how you contribute to the seminar environment. As you do so, bear the following in mind: (1) Quality matters more than quantity. (A few moments of silence spent thinking things through is nothing to be afraid of.) (2) Charity counts for more than cleverness. Scoring points at another’s expense is not to be smiled upon. (3) Listening should demand more of your attention than talking. You are here primarily to learn, not to perform. Wondering how you might participate fruitfully in seminar? Consider these examples:
   1. Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person says.
   2. Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said.
   3. Take notes when your classmates speak, so you can remember their contributions and formulate good questions and comments in response.
   4. Make a comment that underscores the link between two people’s contributions.
   5. Make a comment that summarizes our conversation so far and/or suggests new direction and questions to be explored in the future.
   6. Make a comment indicating that you found another person’s ideas interesting or useful.
   7. Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said.
   8. Find a way to express appreciation for the insight you have gained from the discussion.

Grades are assigned according to the following guidelines for papers: “A” designates an excellent paper that performs the task assigned, has superior content, is carefully composed and elegantly written. Good writing style is essential for an “A.” “B” is a good paper that fulfills the assignment and is basically well-written. “C” papers fulfill the assignment but are not well-written. “D” means that the paper just barely fulfills the assignment. “F” means the paper does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

**Academic Integrity**: Part of learning to participate in scholarly dialogue is learning to cite one’s sources properly. For all written assignments, sources must be cited properly (any format is acceptable so long as it is consistent and cites specific page numbers within a given work). For help preparing written assignments—including help preparing proper citations—students should consult the Yale Writing Center (<http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students>).

**Course Policies**: Attendance at all seminar meetings (via Zoom) is expected except in case of emergencies. Unexcused absences from the seminar will result in a reduction of the final course grade.

**Required Texts (prices through bn.com)**

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2000. ISBN: 978-0826412768 $23.49

Jennings, Willie James. *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 978-0-8028-7844-1 $19.99

*The Analects of Confucius*. Trans. Simon Leys. New York: Norton, 1997. ISBN: 978-0393316995 $8.65

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0199555468 $7.93

**Schedule of Meetings**

**The Contemporary Crisis in College Education**

September 1 Course Introduction

September 3 “College”: An American Idea

Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, 9–66.

September 8 Education, Democracy, and the Market

Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, 13–46.

Scott Gerber, “How Liberal Arts Colleges Are Failing America,” *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2012.

Randall Collins, “Credential Inflation and the Future of Universities,” *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 228-236.

September 13 Education, Race, and “The Dream”

Ta-Nehisi Coates*, Between the World and Me*, 25-64, 135-152

**Confucian Visions of Education**

September 15 Analects I

Confucius, *Analects*, Chapters 1–10.

September 20 Analects II

Confucius, *Analects*, Chapters 11–20.

September 22 Self and Society

Philip Ivanhoe, “Conceptions of Self, Society, and World,” *Confucian Reflections*, 17–30.

Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Being in and Learning from Tradition,” *Confucian Reflections: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times*, 1–16.

September 27 Education II: Mencius

Mencius, 2A6, 6A1, 2, 6-9, 11, 14-18

Philip Ivanhoe, “Mengzi,” *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, 15-28.

September 29 Education III: Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi)

Chu Hsi, *Learning to Be a Sage*, selections

***Confucianism Papers Due October 1***

**Christian Visions of Education**

October 4 The Life of Jesus

“Introduction to the Life of Jesus,” Selections from the New Testament

October 6 New Testament Visions of Flourishing Life

“Three Aspects of Flourishing,” Selections from the New Testament

October 11 Augustine of Hippo’s Theological Anthropology

Augustine, *Confessions*, selections.

———, *Sermon 179A*, §4.

October 13 Education I: Belonging

Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, “Prologue,” and “Buildings”

October 18 Education II: Belonging

Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, “Motions” and “Eros”

***Christianity Paper Due October 22***

**Modern Options**

October 25 Rousseau I: The Inner Voice and the Self

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, Book I (selection).

———. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Eighth Walk (selection).

———. *Emile*, Book IV (selections).

October 27 Rousseau II: Pedagogy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, Book I.

November 1 Wollstonecraft I: Anthropology and Private Education

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chapters 2, 6, 10–11.

November 3 Wollstonecraft II: National Education

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chapter 12.

November 8 Freire I: Education and Liberation

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 1

November 10 Freire II: The Banking Concept of Education

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 2

November 15 bell hooks I

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, selections

November 17 bell hooks II

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, selections

**What Is Your Education For?**

November 29 Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 1

December 1 Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 2

December 6 Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 3

December 8 Final Paper Presentations and Discussion 4

***Final Papers Due December 16***