**LS 201 Sophomore Seminar: Exploring the Human Condition**

**Winter 2019 – Section 3**

**Room AB 4301**

**M-Th 3:35-5:40**

**Professor Christine Levecq**

**Office: AB 4522 (across from 4507)**

**Office phone: 762 7980**

**Office hours: M and Th, 2:15-3:15, and by appointment**

**Email:** [**clevecq@kettering.edu**](mailto:clevecq@kettering.edu)

**Course description**

Kettering University’s vision is to make a better world through technological innovation, leadership, and service. This interdisciplinary seminar provides a foundation for this vision by asking such questions as: What is the human condition? What is culture and how is it created? How do ideas and values shape our views and actions? What is the relationship between the individual and society? How is power used and abused? What does it mean to be a critical thinker? This is a writing- and reading-intensive course designed to improve students’ critical thinking skills. It includes reading assignments from both the Social Sciences (anthropology, sociology, social psychology, history, etc.) and the Humanities (philosophy, literature, and the arts). It exposes students to differing cultural perspectives. As a seminar, this course encourages student participation and leadership through class discussion and a large final research paper that students share with one another.

**Course objectives**

Students will learn the following: 1. To interpret texts from a variety of disciplines across the Humanities and Social Sciences; 2. To frame questions about and assess various responses to course material; 3. To understand ethical and social issues pertinent to this material; 4. To visualize the perspective of another; 5. To understand cultural and social differences, and how culture and society are products of human activity; 6. To think critically; 7. To craft persuasive oral arguments in response to the course material; and 8. To craft insightful, nuanced, persuasive written arguments in response to course readings and literary criticism.

**Required material**

The coursepack needs to be ordered online at a special address that is posted on Blackboard under “Important course information.” If you haven’t done so yet, you need to get ahold of all this material **right away**. **If you don’t have a** **hard copy** **of the assigned reading in class,** **you will be marked absent**. **No electronic copies allowed.**

Small yellow legal pad, 8 by 5 inches (available at the C-store).

Notebook, preferably with pockets for handouts.

Coursepack.

Stephen Mitchell. *Gilgamesh*. Free Press. ISBN 9780743261692.

August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*. Plume. ISBN 9780452265349.

**Requirements**

**1. Attendance and participation**

You are expected to be present, to read all the assigned material before coming to class, to bring the day’s reading to class, and to participate in discussions. If you have to be absent, you are responsible for finding out what was said and done in class (feel free to contact me). You are allowed **two unexcused absences** without penalty. An excuse is a serious impediment—for example, NOT a broken alarm clock or a dentist appointment. Any additional unexcused absence will **lower your final grade** by 1/40th of a point (for example, if your final grade is 3.5 and you have one additional unexcused absence, it will go down to 3.4). **If you have more than five absences, you will automatically fail the class. Absences due to late admission are excused, but count toward this maximum.**

**2. Written responses (15%)**

In the course of the term you will hand in **twelve written responses** to the readings, to be handed in at the beginning of class. Each written response will consist in an answer to a question you will receive at least one day before class. It should cover at least one side, and no more than two sides (single-spaced), of a pad sheet. **It should be specific enough that it shows you have read the assigned material carefully and to the end**. Responses will be graded pass or fail. There are 13 written responses on the syllabus, so you can opt out of one of them.

**3. Writing assignments (55%)**

You will write **two papers** this term. In each of the two papers, you need to develop an insightful argument or thesis. **Paper 1** (15%) should be 4 to 5 pages long. **Paper 2** (25%), your final project, should be 7 to 8 pages long. For each paper, you need to hand in a **paper proposal** (5%). For paper 2, you will need to turn in a **complete draft** (5%) at a specified time toward the end of the term, and **present it** **to the class** (5%). If for some valid reason you need an extension, you need to contact me before the paper or draft is due, and we will arrange a new deadline. If you don’t turn in the paper or draft by that new deadline, the grade on the paper will be lowered, or you won’t be allowed to present the draft to the class. **Passing both papers (which includes putting them on Blackboard as Word documents) is a minimum requirement for passing the course, independently of your grade point average.**

**4. Draft reviews (10%)**

For paper 2, you will need to turn in **ten draft reviews**: 4 need to comment on thesis; 3 need to comment on topic sentences; 3 need to comment on analysis of evidence. Each review needs to be one page long, give or take a few lines, and should be sent electronically as a Word document to both the student and myself before the beginning of the class during which the draft will be discussed.

**5. Final exam (20%)**

There will be one **final exam**. It will consist of a total of 10 questions. In a majority of these questions, you will be asked to identify a given item (a quotation or a character), i.e. identify the author and the title of the work, and relate the item to the major themes of the work.

**Start preparing for the exam right away: take good notes during discussion, and read the works carefully and to the end.**

**Miscellaneous**

**Tardiness** will be penalized. I will close the door at exactly 3:35, so if you have to knock and be let in, you will be considered late. Two cases of tardiness will amount to an absence.

**Electronic devices**

Please leave computers, cell phones, and other devices in your bags (even if you’re not using them).

**Ethics and Academic Integrity**

Kettering University values academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, collusion, misconduct, fabrication, and plagiarism are serious offenses. Each student has a responsibility to understand, accept, and comply with the University’s standards of academic conduct as set forth in our statements “Ethics in the University” and “Academic Integrity” as well as policies established by their individual professors. **Plagiarism will result in automatic failure for the whole course. Remember that plagiarism includes any form of unacknowledged borrowing, even if partial or reworked in your own words.**

**Students with Documented Disabilities**

The University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students needs to register with the Wellness Center every term they are enrolled in classes. To be assured of having services when they are needed, students should contact the Wellness Center during the first week of each term. Note that it is the student’s responsibility to arrange accommodations with each professor.

**Help with papers**

After you receive an assignment for a paper, I strongly encourage you to have a conference with me so we can discuss it. I am also willing to read drafts. If you’d like me to read a draft, give me or send me the draft by 8:00 pm the day before we have class, and I will return it to you in class marked with comments.

Also, please take advantage of the ASC, the Academic Success Center at 3342AB. Their tutoring hours are posted on the university's website.

**Electronic correspondence**

You should check your email 24 hours before each class. I will answer questions you send me by email. I’m also willing to respond to short writing samples, such as a thesis statement or a few sentences, by email. Remember: if you’re in search of a topic or thesis, live discussion is much preferable to email. Also, please keep in mind that emailing a professor is different from texting a friend, and you should apply a minimum of etiquette.

**Grading**

Criteria for grading follow the grade descriptions in the Undergraduate Catalog: A is outstanding, B is good, C is adequate, D is poor but not failing, F is failing. For equivalencies between letter grades and the 4-point system, see Undergraduate Catalog.

I will only accept **auditing** on condition that you hold yourself to the attendance policy.

**Reading schedule**

**Week 1 What is civilization?**

M 7 Jan Course introduction – Th 10 Jan *Gilgamesh*. **WR1.**

**Week 2 Private and public spheres**

M 14 Jan Euripides, *Suppliant Women* (CP). **WR2.**

Th 17 Jan Sennett, “The Public Domain” (CP). **WR3. Assign paper 1.**

**Week 3 Morality/ethics**

M 21 Jan Martin Luther King day—no class

Th 24 Jan Maupassant, “Boule de Suif” (CP). **WR4.**

**Week 4 The myth of self-reliance**

M 28 Jan Davis, “Life in the Iron Mills” (CP). **WR5.**

Th 31 Jan no class. Coontz, “We Always Stood on Our Own Two Feet” (CP). **Email WR6.**

Fr 1 Feb, by 8:00 pm **Paper proposal 1 due.**

**Week 5 Sex and gender**

M 4 Feb **Peer review paper 1 (WR 7)**

Th 7 Feb Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (CP). **WR8. Paper 1 due.**

**Week 6 Multiculturalism/national identity**

M 11 Feb Lahiri, from *Interpreter of Maladies* (CP). **WR9.**

Th 14 Feb Pérez, “Fender Bender.” **WR 10. Assign paper 2.**

**Week 7 Race**

M 18 Feb Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*. **WR11.**

Th 21 Feb Shapiro, “The Cost of Being Black and the Advantage of Being White” (CP). **WR12.**

Sat 23 Feb, by 8:00 pm **Paper proposal 2 due.**

**Week 8 Art**

M 25 Feb library session – Th 28 Feb Art and the modern world.

**Week 9**

M 4 Ma conferences - Tu 5 Ma, by 8:00 pm **Week 9 Thursday drafts due**

Th 7 Ma student presentations

Sat 9 Ma, by 8:00 pm **Week 10 Monday drafts due**

**Week 10**

M 11 Ma student presentations - Tu 12 Ma, by 8:00 pm **Week 10 Thursday drafts due**

Th 14 Ma student presentations

**Week 11**

M 18 Ma review - **At the final: Paper 2 due.**