HUMANITIES 414: The Individual in the Contemporary World
UNC Asheville – Summer 2015
Ghana Study Abroad Program

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Prerequisites: 75 credit hours, HUM 124, 214, 324 (or permission of Humanities Program Director, Dr. Brian Hook)

Course Description:
This course is the fourth in the series of Humanities courses that form the center of the liberal arts education offered by UNCA. Its historical coverage begins with the mid-1940s, continues to the present, and offers speculation about the future. The course attempts to integrate and summarize the many contemporary forces which have formed the present human condition.

Course Objectives:
The course is intended to help students refine their understanding of the issues confronting the individual and society today, more specifically:

- To lead students to realize that they are the heirs of ages of accumulated thought, decisions, and productions, and co-creators of contemporary culture.
- To familiarize students with major trends in the development of Western civilizations; with aspects of the development of other cultures; and with human accomplishments which are both noteworthy and representative.
- To develop awareness of the validity of different perspectives, and to go beyond relativism to appreciate underlying human values.
- To understand the concept of "community" and to realize the ways in which individuals both develop, and are developed by, their communities; to question social conventions critically and responsibly; and to realize the effects of one's decisions upon the community.
- To realize the presence and role of power-structures throughout history, and to understand their effects upon human development
- To develop a deep understanding of how these topics impact Ghanaian society.

The Student Learning Outcomes are:
1. Students demonstrate knowledge of contemporary human diversity— in cultures and in personal identities
2. Students identify the connection of values, beliefs, and cultural forms to humanity’s economic, social and environmental sustainability
3. Students write a well-supported, organized, and clearly articulated argument using both primary and secondary sources, and appropriate documentation style
4. Students gather, document, analyze, and integrate information about contemporary texts and other cultural forms

Required Texts:
**Humanities 414 Course Themes:**
These are issues we will talk about time and again. By the end of the semester you’ll be sick of me bringing them up. Just to get started on the right foot, here they are:
- Globalization
- Cultural Hybridity
- Rights and Universals
- Identity and Liberation
- Representation and Reality
- Sustainability
- Participation and Estrangement

**Evaluation /Grading:**
Class attendance is required. More than two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of one full letter grade for each class missed. More than 4 unexcused absences may result in an automatic grade of F for the course. For this course I will use the standard 10-point scale. Late work will be accepted with a 10% grade reduction for each class late.

- 30% Final essay
- 30% participation (includes in-class exercises and weekly quizzes)
- 20% Journal entries
- 20% Reading response summaries

Participation: Small seminar classes depend on student participation for their success. If you don’t talk, things get dull fast. We all benefit from the resultant conversation. You don’t have to have answers, but I expect questions. In order to do this, you must be present in class and you must have completed the reading. I will give quizzes on the reading if I deem it necessary. We cover a lot of territory in a short amount of time. A few absences can do irreparable damage.

Reading Response Summaries: This class relies heavily on all students’ participation in the discussions. In order to better facilitate this, I am requiring that you prepare yourself for the class by responding to the text in one typed page. This is NOT a summary of the content. I want you to struggle with the text: what do you agree/disagree with, what sounds reasonable/unreasonable, what gets you excited or makes you angry?

Journal Entries: You will keep a journal in which you record your reaction to conversations and field trips related to the course topics. I will require you to submit two entries per week.

Plagiarism: The presentation of anyone else's words or ideas as your own (i.e., without giving that person credit) is a serious offense. If you use someone else's words, use quotation marks and a note citing the source. If you use someone else's ideas in your own words, you also must note the source. If you plagiarize, your actions will be reported to your advisor and to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, you will receive a grade of zero on the assignment, and you may not re-do the assignment for a higher grade.