

**CLS 101US, UNIVERSITY SEMINAR**  
*Knowledge, Identity, and Society*  
**SYLLABUS, Fall 2009**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of the University Seminar is to provide an exciting and challenging introduction to college studies that will help you expand your intellectual interests, improve your thinking and communication skills, and enjoy conversation in a community of learners. The University Seminar considers ideas and texts from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences to explore the major course themes: knowledge, identity and society.

This course is different from nearly any other course you are likely to take at MSU. It is small, it approaches the subject matter from multi-disciplinary perspectives, and it gives you an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member and other first-year students.

The course is designed to engage you in university life and college-level learning through reading, thinking and dialogue. Everyone in the course is a learner, including the faculty. Faculty will be reading texts outside their disciplines. They, like you, will be exploring new ideas and unfamiliar readings.

This course emphasizes speaking and thinking in classroom discussions. The course will help you communicate your thinking in a small group setting and help you develop effective listening skills. It will also help you improve your ability to read critically and communicate effectively in writing. It fulfills the university seminar core curriculum requirement.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

1. Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*, translated by F. J. Church
2. Galileo, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina" (On reserve)
3. Tim Flannery, *The Weather Makers*
4. Myles Horton, *The Long Haul*
5. Atul Gawande, *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*
6. V.S. Ramachandran, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind*
7. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

**CENTRAL COURSE QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean "to know"? What does it mean "to be wise"? What is "truth"?
2. How can we recognize and question our own preconceived notions and develop a better understanding of the world and our place in it? How do preconceived notions influence our actions?
3. What does it mean to be human? What shapes our identity?
4. What is a good life for humans? What is a good way for humans to live?
5. What is a responsible citizen?
6. What are the roles and responsibilities of teachers, students, and the academy in society?
7. What responsibilities do citizens have for thinking critically about their society? What responsibility do we have to act for the good of society?

**COURSE ACTIVITIES** (See the *Guide to CLS 101*, <http://cls101.montana.edu>, for more detailed descriptions.)

**1. Seminar Discussions.** Discussions in small seminars are vitally important to this course. Each seminar section will serve as an intellectual community where you can exchange ideas with other people who are reading and thinking about the same subject and who bring their own unique perspectives to class discussions. You will have many opportunities to discuss your own questions and interests in the seminar.

**2. Readings.** The course readings are indispensable and one of the most important components of the course. Although you will not be held responsible for memorizing specific facts from the books we read, your instructor may quiz you over the material. Your responsibility is to read the assignments, think about them, be willing to discuss them in class, and complete other work assigned by your instructor.

**4. Written Assignments and Oral Presentations.**

**A) Weekly Essay.** You will write a weekly essay in which you think on paper about course readings and themes. The essay will help you expand on class discussion and help you find topics for papers. The essays will be collected each week and should consist of at least one typed page.

**B) Oral Presentations.** You will give a short presentation on Socrates or Galileo, on your mid-term paper, on the semester project and on your final paper. At least once during the semester you will gain additional practice in presentation as assigned by your instructor.

**C) Mid-Term Paper.** You will write one paper (typed, double-spaced, 3-4 pages) in which you present and support a claim, drawing on at least two of the course readings.

**D) Final Paper.** You will write a final paper (typed, double-spaced, 4-5 pages) in which you present and support a claim, drawing on at least two of the course readings.

**E) Semester Project.** Individual or group project as assigned by your instructor.

**F) Final Discussion.** The final exam is a discussion of your final paper and course readings with your instructor. The 20 minute discussion takes place during exam week and is scheduled individually with your instructor.

**COURSE GOALS** (what you can expect to gain from this course)

1. Improve your ability to

- speak effectively about your ideas in class.
- take charge of your education by asking and exploring your own questions.
- prepare and deliver a thoughtful oral presentation.
- listen effectively.
- understand diverse points of view.
- read critically and interpret texts.
- write a thoughtful college paper.

2. Strengthen habits of critical thinking.

3. Expand your interests in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

4. Know a faculty member and other students well.

5. Enjoy the discussion and development of ideas and participation in a community of learners.

## EXPECTATIONS (What faculty expect from you.)

1. That you attend all classes and conferences. Your instructor may have a specific attendance policy. For example, in some seminars, absences result in a lower final grade.
2. That you are courteous to faculty and other students. This means, at a minimum, arriving on time, not having side conversations during discussion, turning off your cell phone, and not packing up and getting ready to leave before the end of class.
3. That you treat all members of the seminar with respect and civility.
4. That you prepare for class by doing the assigned reading in advance.
5. That you complete all the oral and written assignments.
6. That you are an active participant in class discussions.
7. That you let your faculty know if you are having problems in the course.
8. That you adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. At the least, *plagiarism*, deliberately using someone else's language, ideas, or other original material without acknowledging its source, will result in failing an assignment. This policy applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers. Depending on the severity and intent of the offense, a person who engages in academic dishonesty may fail the course and/or face further disciplinary action by the university. **All incidents of plagiarism and cheating will be reported to the Dean of Students.**

## GRADING SUMMARY

The course grade is comprised of the following:

1) Engaged Class Participation (attendance, listening, preparation, discussion)	250
2) Weekly Essay	150
3) Oral Presentations (Presentation on Socrates, Mid-term and Final Papers, Semester Project, Additional Practice)	200
4) Mid-Term Paper	150
5) Final Paper	175
6) Seminar Project	50
7) Final Discussion	25
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Total:	1000 points

The final grade will be calculated as follows: 930-1000 A, 900-929 A-, 870-899 B+, 830-869 B, 800-829 B-, 770-799 C+, 730-769 C, 700-729 C-, 670-699 D+, 600-669 D, <600 F. Failure to complete all course assignments or to meet course expectations (see above) may result in a failing grade for the course. ***This course is not repeatable.***