

ENGL 2080 Topics in Intellectual Inquiry
Sample Syllabus 1

●**Course:** ENGL 2080-XX Topics in Intellectual Inquiry: The Crisis of Reason

●**Course Description:**

This course investigates the intellectual developments from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, roughly the period in which the Enlightenment defined man as a creature of reason, buttressing the argument with classical foundations. But almost immediately, such a definition and such foundations were questioned. Ultimately, through art, philosophy and just overall historical events, such simplifications were refuted, putting what man is and how he defines himself in crisis. Thus each work will in a way “speak” to each other, developing similar ideas, or contesting previous ones. Specifically, these works investigate the definitions and limits of man, reason, and knowledge.

These works will be approached and interpreted in numerous ways, either historically, culturally, philosophically, literarily, etc. The course will deepen your understanding of the culture in which you live and think, and appreciate the achievements done by those who have come before you. It also has the goal of covering the intellectual history and heritage you inherit and become part of as a college student.

●**Course Outcomes:**

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- 1) *Read and comprehend college-level literary and philosophical texts, focusing on identifying and discussing multiple levels of meanings in texts, with the ability to evaluate and arbitrate diverse interpretations of literary and philosophical texts.*
- 2) *Express a broad knowledge of the intellectual history of the Western culture from 1500 to the present, with a specific focus on major literary and philosophical texts, connecting them to their historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts.*
- 3) *Identify elements of at least one body of thought (e.g. the Enlightenment), and apply them to a specific problem or question.*
- 4) *Recognize different literary genres and subgenres and articulate how they inform content and meaning in texts.*
- 5) *Write textual analysis and criticism by constructing a thesis, gathering evidence, integrating sources and organizing elements of an argument.*

In addition, as part of your general education requirements, this course has the overarching goal of developing critical thinking, communication, and broadening the cultural intelligence of students

●**Course Texts:**

Descartes, Rene. *A Discourse on Method, and Meditations on First Philosophy*

Voltaire. *Candide*.

Gustave Flaubert. *Madame Bovary*.

John Milton. *Paradise Lost*.

Camus. *The Stranger*.

*Immanuel Kant. *Basic Writings of Kant*. }make sure that you get these exact

*Friedrich Nietzsche. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. }texts since they are selections

Anthony Burgess. *A Clockwork Orange*.

various handouts.

●Course Procedures:

All students will produce the following:

Responses to Readings/Participation:

Responses: To make sure that you keep up with the readings, *I will require short 1-2 paragraph responses to the readings every class meeting*. These will actually help you much more than you think they will. Their content can be whatever you want, but relevant, and they can cover one of the readings or more for that particular day.

Participation: It should be understood that your participation and contribution to a group like this is very important. To emphasize that, your participation and contribution will be assessed by me as part of your overall grade. This assessment will be highly subjective on my part, so fake that enthusiasm and interest if it isn't there.

--45%

Research Paper: Longer, researched written essay, which can be a critical reading of a work or romanticism, or a core feature present in a few works of romanticism. 10 to 12 pages, at least two secondary sources used.

--25%

Tests: We will have three tests, each consisting of identification of passages and a written essay, where you show off your ability to assess the history and development of romanticism, as well as your understanding of these difficult yet important texts.

--10% each, for a total of 30%

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Week 1

The 17th Century: Defining the Enlightenment, Defining Man:

From the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Humanism":
[read sections 1 and 2]

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/humanism/>

From "The History Guide" on "Renaissance Humanism":

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/humanism.html>

From "The New Intellectual Order: Man, Nature and Society":
[read only the section on Rene Descartes]

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture8a.html>

Descartes, A Discourse on Method. Parts 1 & 2

Week 2 From the Internet Encyclopedia: "Descartes" [sections 3, 4, & 10]

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/descarte/>

Descartes, A Discourse on Method. Parts 3 & 4

From the Internet Encyclopedia: "Descartes" [read sections 5-7]

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/descarte/>

Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditations 1 to 3

Week 3 John Milton, Paradise Lost, introduction, pgs vii-xli
Book 1, pgs 1-22

John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book 4, pgs 73-100

John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book 9, pgs 185-216

Week 4 The 18th Century: Reigning in Reason: Pt I, Satire:
John Lock, Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Voltaire, Candide

Alexander Pope poetry

Week 5 The 18th Century: Reigning in Reason: Pt II, What is Reason?:
Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason:

Kant, Critique of Practical Reason,

Kant, Critique of Aesthetic Judgment,

- Week 6 Romantic Poetry
- Week 7 Charles Baudelaire
- Week 8 *The 19th Century, Pt. II: Doubt & Criticism*
Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary
- Week 9 Friedrich Nietzsche
- Week 10 Sigmund Freud
- Week 11 *The 20th Century: The Crisis of Modern Man:*
T.S. Eliot and the Modernists
- Week 12 Albert Camus, The Stranger
- Week 13 Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot
- Week 14 Anthony Burgess, A Clockwork Orange