

HUM-2040: PUBLIC HUMANITIES

Cuyahoga Community College

Viewing: HUM-2040 : Public Humanities

Board of Trustees:

December 2025

Academic Term:

Fall 2026

Subject Code

HUM - Humanities

Course Number:

2040

Title:

Public Humanities

Catalog Description:

Public Humanities covers the intersection between the intellectual rigor of academia and the public life of everyday people. The course investigates different views on the subject of what public intellectuals owe the everyday world we live in, how such scholars can engage with the problems we all face in our lives, and, finally, the role that public intellectuals have in shaping community activity and public policy.

Credit Hour(s):

3

Lecture Hour(s):

3

Requisites

Prerequisite and Corequisite

ENG-1010 College Composition I or ENG-101H Honors College Composition I.

Outcomes

Course Outcome(s):

Develop insights into the importance of scholarship and intellectual activity as a civic responsibility by examining the public contributions of intellectuals in the arts and sciences.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Objective(s):

1. Discuss the impact on society of scholarly works and public intellectuals in the ancient world.
2. Explain how scholarship and intellectual activity promotes community engagement and civic responsibility.

Course Outcome(s):

Develop a personal view regarding the intersection between the role of the intellectual within the public world of action and the academic sphere of scholarship.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Critical/Creative Thinking: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

Objective(s):

1. Compare and contrast the influence specific scholars/scholarly writings have had on addressing public problems/social challenges.

2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented by various scholars on the role of intellectuals in public life.
3. Develop a personal view on the role of intellectuals in public life.

Course Outcome(s):

Analyze worldwide attitudes about the role of informed and scholarly thinking on the communities, both foreign and domestic.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Objective(s):

1. Examine the often-far-reaching impact solutions to public problems may have.
2. Discuss how various scholarly writings have attempted to shape the public sphere.

Course Outcome(s):

Examine how public intellectuals breach the often difficult distance between scholarly rhetoric and communication that is accessible to everyone.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

Objective(s):

1. Discuss historical ways/venues that scholars have used to communicate their ideas to audiences outside of traditional academic settings.
2. Discuss ways that today's scholars utilize to communicate their ideas to audiences outside of traditional academic settings in order to influence actions taken in the community.

Course Outcome(s):

Analyze the public spaces for intellectual debate and artistic celebration within the local community.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Objective(s):

1. Explain how public intellectualism and civic mindedness shape the public policies of the local community.
2. Attend a local forum for intellectual debate or artistic celebration and reflect on its potential for influencing public policies.

Methods of Evaluation:

1. Tests and quizzes
2. Reading reflections
3. Analysis of neighborhood's cultural and intellectual life

Course Content Outline:

1. Public intellectualism, what is it
2. Public Intellectuals in the ancient world
 - a. Patronage
 - b. Teaching Academies
 - c. Public art projects
3. Public intellectuals in the modern era
 - a. Religion and Art
 - b. Art and Political Courts
 - c. Renaissance and Humanism

4. Public Intellectuals in the Industrial Era
 - a. The experiment of Democracy
 - b. The artistic voice of the common person
 - c. Political and social activism at the dawn of the 20th century
5. Characteristics of Public Intellectuals
 - a. Political Activism
 - b. Youth Activism
 - c. Civil Rights Activism
 - d. Science Activism
 - e. Speaking to the Public

Religious Accommodation

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

Religious Accommodation:

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: <https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/ReligiousAccommodationForm>. Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College's Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at legal@tri-c.edu.

Other Required Instructional Policies:

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

Weekly Schedule

	Topics
Week 1	Introduction... what is a public intellectual
Week 2	Public intellectuals of antiquity, part 1
Week 3	Public intellectuals of antiquity, part 2
Week 4	Medieval intellectuals
Week 5	The Renaissance—an intellectual reimagining
Week 6	Intellectuals and the birth of American Democracy
Week 7	Intellectuals in the age of Mass Communication
Week 8	Intellectuals and the Community
Week 9	Youth intellectual movements
Week 10	Psychological intellectuals
Week 11	The Intellectual Historian
Week 12	The Intellectual Scientist
Week 13	The Intellectual Scientist part 2
Week 14	Intellectualism and Political Punditry
Week 15	Intellectualism and Feminism
Week 16	The Professional Intellectual

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

Required/Recommended Readings

Readings will be from one of the below recommended textbooks, as selected by the individual instructors.

- Richard Hoftstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*
- Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*
- Christopher Hitchens, *Letters to a Young Contrarian*
- Howard Zinn, *The People's History of the United States*
- Jordan Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Collected Works*
- Gore Vidal, *Inventing America*

Resources for the Instructor

Richard Dawkins. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford Landmark Science.

Noam Chomsky. *It is the Responsibility of Intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies*. 2017.

Howard Zinn. *A People's History of the United States*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics; Reissue edition. Harper, 2015.

Neil deGrasse Tyson. *Letters from an Astrophysicist*. 2019.

Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991*. 2020.

Henry Gates Jr. *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*. 2019.

Richard Feynman. *Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman*. 2018.

Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation (The Body, In Theory: Histories Of Cultural Materialism)*. 1994.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg. *My Own Words*. 2018.

Slovož Zizek. *In Defense of Lost Causes*. 2017.

Jordan Peterson. *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*. 2018.

Greta Thunberg. *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*. 2019.

Malala Yousafzai. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World*. 2016.

Gloria Steinem. *The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off!: Thoughts on Life, Love, and Rebellion*. 2019.

Cornel West. *Race Matters*. 2017.

Timothy Snyder. *Our Malady: Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary*. 2022.

Martha Nussbaum. *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*. 2018.

Leslie Feinberg. *Stone Butch Blues*. 2018.

Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*. 2017.

Dr. Ruth Westheimer. *All in a Lifetime: An Autobiography*. 2001.

Upton Sinclair. *The Jungle*. 2022.

George Orwell. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. 2024.

Emma Goldman. *The Essential Emma Goldman—Anarchism, Feminism, Liberation*. 2024.

Plato. *Great Dialogues of Plato*. 2015.

Virgil. *The Aeneid*. 2008.

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison. *The Federalist Papers*.

Alexis De Toqueville. *Democracy in America*. 2002.

Jane Goodall. *In The Shadow Of Man*. 2010.

Angela Davis. "Are Prisons Obsolete" 2003.

Additional Resources for the Instructor

Videos of public speeches made the authors mentioned as resources for the class (those who were alive at the time of recording).

Top of page

Key: 5159