

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW: HUMANITIES III

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Humanities III focuses on the close reading of several great classical texts as listed in the *Humanities III Curriculum Guide*.

We also cultivate skills for having successful group discussions using the Touchstones program, Volume 2. This program prescribes a set of short readings followed by a variety of discussion exercises designed to help students learn the art of group discussion.

DAILY/WEEKLY RHYTHM

Each day opens with a selected verse from the Psalms, and with prayer. We will then read a portion of the assigned text out-loud, sometimes seeking to ‘hear’ the rhythm of the words, the figures of speech, the language itself, the ‘word-music’. Sometimes we will seek to do a ‘close reading’ of the text, commenting on certain words, phrases, sentences, and ideas. During this time we will mark the text for keywords, unknown words, key phrases, Great Ideas, and discussion questions. Sometimes we will have a more wide-ranging student led discussion related to the text at hand. Nightly the students will also be asked to record a reading log drawn from the material that they engaged with in their 30 minutes of reading at home.

CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING GOALS

Spiritual Domain: Our foundational and ultimate learning goal is to help our students know God and enjoy Him forever. To this end, as a teacher I seek to model a Christ-like spirit, to love my students, and to fan into flame the joy of learning. Daily the students enter a selected verse from the Psalms into their learning journal, including the first few words of the Latin Vulgate version. Together we briefly discuss the spiritual dimensions of the verse, and use it as the foundation for our daily prayer.

Liberal Domain: Having focused on the Word, we then turn to the words of the classical text we are reading: their definition, their etymology, their use in the text. The overarching learning goal is to cultivate through repeated practice the habit of paying close and careful attention to the words in the text, in short, to become good readers. Students take turns reading the text out-loud. They mark the text. They make entries into their learning journals. Following Aristotle’s wisdom, we believe such repeated practice will develop a habit of approaching a text in such a way that leads to the formation of a careful reader, capable of engaging with any text to gain comprehension and understanding of the writer’s contribution to The Great Conversation. Reviewing and intentionally focusing on the 102 Great Ideas of Western Classical Culture that the students memorized in the 8th grade fosters this process. They identify them in the text they are reading, and to use them as prompts in their written work.

Written work is based on using forms learned in the Progymnasmata, as well as the five-paragraph essay form. Short essays will be written during both semesters, as well as on the students' final exams. Repeated practice in using the forms to demonstrate their comprehension of the text develops the habit of using the text to support their comments, rather than using a snippet of text as a springboard into their own thoughts and opinions with little or no reference to the text itself, in short, to become good writers, demonstrating skills both of analysis of what the writer is saying, and of synthesis with the student's thoughts on the text. This is an ongoing process and will continue throughout their upper school career.

MORAL OBJECTIVES

The discussion and memorization of the virtues are a key part of the humanities curriculum. In class we memorize the definitions of the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues, one every month, as well as a scriptural verse that accompanies the virtues. We center our discussions of the texts we read around our moral development. Another of our learning goals is self-management. Using the reading journal requires students to make careful, daily entries in three sections: the daily log, definitions & etymologies, and dictation sections. The daily practice of making such entries, and their periodic assessment for grade points, is intended to develop the habits of neatness and completeness that lead to the formation of mature self-management skills.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Humanities III has a number of specific learning objectives that are described in detail in the Curriculum Guide for 9th Grade

ASSESSMENT

For Humanities III, assessment takes place in four categories: Participation and Behavior, Reading Log, Quizzes and Tests, and Writing and Grammar. Quizzes are the most heavily weighted category and on average the others are weighted at 20% of the semester grade.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement with the 9th graders will help them be successful.

Parents should access lesson plans, homework, and grades in RenWeb. It would be helpful if parents and their 9th grader would look into RenWeb on a weekly basis, with the parent assisting them in learning how to access it and use it to check their progress and look up assignments.

Parents will keep their freshman accountable to their 30 minutes of nightly reading each evening. This time includes reading log entries that are handed in every Monday morning. Reading logs are checked for comprehension of both plot and engagement with the difficult and exciting ideas presented. Parents will help their children understand how to mark a Great Book, which includes identifying both unknown words and keywords, as well as key phrases, and annotating the text with comments and questions in the margins of the book. These markings are scored at announced intervals while reading the text and upon completion of the book.

As teacher and parents we form a partnership in the learning experience of your student. Please feel free to e-mail and/or call me with any questions or concerns. I also will be happy to meet with you; simply request a conference via e-mail and we will schedule a mutually convenient time.