

## Liberal Studies Electives (Degree Level) Course Descriptions – FALL 2020

### Lower-Level Liberal Arts & Humanities (LHUM)

#### **LHUM 1202 / PHC 183 – Monotheistic Religions**

Religious beliefs, expressions, and practices have shaped and reflected how people have interpreted the key questions of existence and how people have marked key events in their lives. This course introduces the religious beliefs, expressions of religious experience, religious practices, and worldviews of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Background to the origin and development of each religion as well as an examination of contemporary issues linked to the religions are included. In contemporary society, the question of negotiating traditional interpretations with current situations has become one of the driving forces behind the study of religion. This course will offer students the opportunity to explore and analyze how key religious beliefs, expressions, and practices from the major western monotheistic traditions influence current public thought.

#### **LHUM 1203 / PHC 180 – The Pleasure of Inquiry**

This course aims to develop the skills of inquiry and argumentation in a time of 'fake news' and destabilized truth by introducing you to the practice of philosophy and approaches to key philosophic questions in a lively, accessible way. It uses ordinary examples such as learning a martial art, detergents, dreaming, films like The Matrix, making money, the rise of artificial intelligence, and everyday consciousness to inquire into ongoing questions regarding knowledge, justice, reality, God, and the human condition, and to consider provocative responses to these questions.

#### **LHUM 1211 / EGC 183 – Storytelling, Meaning and Influence**

Storytelling has become a significant research topic in fields as diverse as psychology, neurophysiology, law, business, and organizational behaviour, as researchers and practitioners try to understand how people construct and convey meaning. With print and multimedia examples drawn from a range of disciplines, this course examines the stories of individuals, organizations, and communities. Through primary and secondary research, students investigate how storytelling creates identity, communicates beliefs and value systems, and influences behaviour. Students document stories in their community and create their own multimedia story.

#### **LHUM 1216 / EGC 182 – The Art of the Short Story**

Students are introduced to the rich world of story and its artistic expression in literature. Brief, yet profound and supple, the short-story genre offers a unique perspective on human experience. Students read a variety of works by writers who are established or new, Canadian and international, ethnic majority and minority, contemporary and historical, and female and male, in order to explore cultural differences as well as shared human experiences. They examine the stories' form and style (e.g. setting, plot, action, characterization, symbolism, narration) to gain insight into content. The study of selected literary terms and critical theories, including theories specifically on the short story, allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the genre and the individual stories.

**LHUM 1226 / PHC 192 – Global Ancient Thought**

Great thinkers have existed around the world and across time. Their ideas have been an integral part of social, economic, cultural, and political life. Their philosophical and literary contribution has not simply been the isolated speculation of a few remarkable individuals but has extended much further: they have shaped their communities and continue to shape our global society today. This course takes a cross-cultural historical look at some of the most influential philosophical and literary traditions, such as the ancient Greek, the ancient Chinese, and ancient Indian traditions as well as others. In each tradition the course will examine various original writings on the following questions: How should we organize our social, economic, cultural, and political life? What is the place of humans in the grand cosmological scheme of things? And how should one live one's life? Some of the writings that we will review to answer the above questions are those of Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Sun Tzu, the Brahmanical tradition, and the Buddha.

**LHUM 1227 / EGC195 – Understanding News Media**

Does news shape our perception of the world? Does it build bridges in the era of globalization, or does it divide? And, given that we use our cell phones and video cameras to record events and broadcast them online, are we all reporters? This course focuses on the impact of news media on society, and how events are covered in different ways with varied meaning and impact in different parts of the world. Various theoretical approaches are applied to analyze and define the current news media reality: McLuhan's, Chomsky's, and Herman's theoretical approaches, among others, are used as frameworks to understand and criticize the changing world of news media. Current theoretical approaches to media are applied to investigate the role of reporters and how the power of news media can inform, influence, educate and mislead its consumers.

**LHUM 1233 – Fact or Fake: Finding Truth(s) in the Era of Fake News**

How do we know if news, video or photos are fake or real? Do we have the time and knowledge to check? Do we want to check? Why should we care? Manufactured and so-called fake news posted on social media have become part of a dangerous new reality. Information spread through social networks is often accepted over traditional more reliable fact-checked news. These manipulations have become powerful tools for politicians, conspiracy theorists, corporations and ordinary people. The effects can be felt in many fields such as science, the environment, politics and culture. This online course will explore the impact of fake news on traditional fact-checked news media and, in turn, its influence on society. Media from a variety of sources will be evaluated for reliability and validity. Students will learn how to deconstruct media in order to distinguish what is fact vs what is fiction.

**Lower-Level Liberal Science & Technology (LSCI)****LSCI 1204 / IAC 192 – Preserving the Planet**

A personal computer running 24 hours per day adds about two tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere each year. When you consider the explosion of computer ownership alone, you can appreciate the growing impact people have on our planet. Preserving the Planet is a natural science course emphasizing awareness, conservation, and sustainability of ecological systems. This course will provide students with an understanding of the major principles in the biological and physical sciences. Students will also learn how technology and schools of thought can have both negative and positive impacts on biodiversity. With this information, students will gain an understanding of problems and solutions to maintaining natural systems. Students will learn the role of scientific inquiry in ecological studies and apply analysis and critical thinking to issues learned in class and their own research.

**Lower-Level Liberal Social Science (LSSC)**

**LSSC 1202 / SYC 180 – Working in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has seen revolutionary changes in the world of work. Increasing precarity, the growth of artificial intelligence in the workplace, and the creation of the gig economy have all contributed to a working environment that has little in common with that experienced by previous generations. This interdisciplinary social science course will explore the history of work in Canada, and the workplace as it now exists, in order to understand how work has evolved and changed and how society is grappling with the issues revealed by these new workplace challenges.

**LSSC 1203 / POC180 – Introduction to Canadian Politics**

How does politics affect your life and future? Is there a Canadian national identity? This course introduces students to major debates and questions in Canadian politics and society, and the more enduring problems underlying these issues. The aim of the course is to foster the student's capacity to develop their own interpretation of Canadian politics and society.

**LSSC 1206 / IAC 193 – Indigenous Education in the Canadian Context**

This course offers an overview of Indigenous Peoples and Education in Canada. The course looks at education in an historical and present-day context, including ways in which Indigenous communities educated their children prior to European contact. It examines the Canadian state's policies on education of Indigenous peoples and explores education in Indigenous communities today. Specifically, the course provides an understanding of residential schools and their impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples, families, and diverse communities. Additionally, students will look at the various ways in which Indigenous people continue to challenge and resist colonial education and reclaim education for themselves and their communities. The main aim of *Indigenous Education in the Canadian Context* is to provide students with a framework for understanding the historical and contemporary issues surrounding Indigenous Education in Canada. It is hoped that through this course students will gain critical insights into the lives and educational attainment of Indigenous peoples.

**LSSC 1209 – Social Psychology**

Why does the presence of others influence the way we behave and think? How do stereotypes develop? Does the way we behave change the way we think? This course provides an overview of research and theory in social psychology examining social influences on an individual's cognition, emotions, and behaviour. Topics include social thinking (the self, social beliefs, attitudes), social influence (persuasion, conformity, group influence), and interpersonal relations (aggression, altruism, prejudice). Students will analyze predominant theories and research in the field of social psychology and their applications.

**LSSC 1220 / SYC 184 – Race and Racism in the Americas and Caribbean**

Racism and the categories of race are pervasive phenomena that occur across the world. Many scholars have argued that the very idea of "race" – the notion that human beings can be divided into groups such as "whites", "blacks", "Indians", etc. – was first invented in the Americas. But what are races? Does it mean the same thing to be "white", "black" or "Asian" in Canada as it does in Brazil or Jamaica? If colour is rooted in assumptions about biology in parts of Canada, does the same hold for the Caribbean? Is race simply a delusion, a cover for political and economic domination? Can we aspire to eliminate the idea of race altogether or is its hold too pervasive, its appeal to the mind too great? This course looks at various stages in the development of racial categories in the Americas and the Caribbean. Our readings include theoretical, ethnographic and literary works, but also our own experiences, the popular media and the language we speak and hear around us.

## Upper-Level Liberal Arts and Humanities (LHUM)

**LHUM 1304 – The Evolution of Mind (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

Is the mind distinct from the body? Do only humans have minds? Is there such thing as a 'collective mind'? What can studies of the brain tell us about the mind and its evolution? Can the evolution of the

mind be studied by inquiring into the origins of language and technology? This course responds to such questions by examining the concepts of 'mind', 'body', 'soul', and 'life'. Then, after reviewing Darwin's theory of human evolution, students will investigate the evolutionary interplay between the mind, language, technology, society, art, science, morality, and religion. We will end by reconsidering notions of agency, intelligence, and personhood in light of post-colonial and feminist thought. Students can expect to learn from a wide variety of disciplines in the humanities and evolutionary sciences, with the goal of understanding the complexity of the concept of mind and the challenges facing questions of its evolution.

**LHUM 1307 – Understanding the Middle East (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

The Middle East often makes the headlines. The phrase "Middle East" appears on various media in relation to topics ranging from the politics of oil to the price of gas, terrorism, war, women's rights, Islam, or the trials and triumphs of democracy. Meanwhile, there is generally little understanding of the region beyond its representation in headlines or in pop culture. Covering the history of the region from the advent of Islam to the present day, this course provides a basic historical understanding of this diverse and complex region and the global influences which have shaped, and continue to shape, what is known as the "Middle East" today. Through a survey of the region's history, culture, and involvement in international politics, participants will gain a better understanding of this intricate and fascinating region and its vital place within the global community.

**LHUM 1310 – Existentialism (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

What is worth living for? If we have an answer - say, love, happiness, justice, or eternal life - where did we get this answer from? Are religion, social norms, political, and economic ideologies credible sources? If not, are we free to create any value and meaning we want for our own lives? And if we are completely free, what sort of responsibility do we have to other people, if any? In this course, we will be exploring these perplexing but fundamental questions about human existence through an examination of philosophical essays, film, and literature from a movement of thinkers and artists known as the existentialists.

**LHUM 1320 – History of Canadian Business (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

This course examines the history of Canadian Business. History provides a framework to help us solve current problems; it gives us context for many of our current issues, as well as similar problems that have occurred a number of times in the past. Understanding what has occurred in the past can help us make better decisions for our future. The course is both a practical and theoretical course. Topics covered include the parameters of studies in history, the origins of many aspects of business, and how we can use these to solve current problems, the greatest being sustainability, inequality, and economic development. The course covers individual topics in Canadian business rather than being a timeline of the development of Canadian business.

## **Upper-Level Liberal Science and Technology (LSCI)**

**LSCI 1301 Troubled Waters: Our Future and the Global Ocean (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

The global ocean is our life-support system. Covering nearly three-quarters of Earth's surface, the oceans produce half of the oxygen in our atmosphere, regulate temperature and climate, and govern nutrient and chemical cycles that sustain all living things, including you. The oceans, however, are in distress. Pollution and unsustainable seafood harvesting are causing fundamental changes throughout the ocean system that will result in dire consequences unless our habits change substantially. Students investigate what is happening to our oceans and the ecological consequences of human-influenced changes in ocean temperature, oxygen, acidity, and biodiversity. Through readings, videos, and class discussion, students learn about human impacts on the ocean and how ocean change will affect not only us but life in general. Students learn the importance of scientific study of the world's

oceans and apply analysis and critical thinking to issues learned in class and through independent research.

**LSCI 1304 The Story of Food: Growth of the Modern Meal (Prerequisite: One lower-level Liberal Studies course)**

Unlike nature's other eaters, humans have developed enormous control over their food chains. Through the use of various technologies, such as agriculture, synthetic fertilizers, and food processing, we have profoundly modified our food chains and, as a result, created entirely new eating possibilities for ourselves. Today our food is abundant and comes from all over the world. Much of what is consumed in the modern world is heavily processed, making it easy to store, quick to prepare, and convenient to eat. This industrialization of food production has given rise to a new type of consumer – the industrial eater. What implications does eating industrially have for our health and for the health of our environment? In this course, students investigate changes in human food chains from the hunter-gatherers to present-day industrialized agriculture and learn about the impacts of modern food production on people, ecosystems, and biodiversity. The critical role of biodiversity within and beyond human food chains is emphasized. Students analyze and think critically about issues explored in class and through independent research.