

Course: Research Methods in the Humanities

PEIMS Code: N1100013

Abbreviation: RESHUM

Number of credits that may be earned: 1

Brief description of the course (150 words or less):

Through study of the humanities—art, film, music, philosophy, literature, anthropology—students explore the idea that we see the world through the filter of our own culture. By bringing together analysis of visual media, auditory media, and written media, the course teaches students how analytical thinking applies across all fields of study and how analytical thinking applies to their day-to-day lives. After guided practice with analysis, the course turns to research, and students learn to conduct college-level research with resources provided by the school district, the public library system, and nearby colleges. The course culminates in the construction of a college-level research essay on a topic of the student's choosing in contemporary culture. This course is field-trip based in order to connect learning to real-world experiences. Students visit art museums and research institutions, and participate in projects at each location.

Although some of the above subject areas and skills are covered in traditional English, history, and humanities classes, this course provides in-depth practice that the other courses cannot, given their time constraints. Providing a chance to analyze various media in one place requires students to be flexible in their critical thinking skills, and thus improve their writing. The Research Methods in the Humanities course prepares students for analysis of secondary sources and completion of an upper-level college research project.

Essential Knowledge and Skills of the course:

1. Humanities
2. English II
3. Analysis of Visual Media
4. World History Studies
5. Psychology
6. Social Studies Research Methods

(1) The student will investigate, independently or collaboratively, many works of canonical literature as well as supplementary material that corresponds to the analysis of "great works" in the Humanities. The student is expected to:

- (A) analyze the relationship between his or her perspective of the world and that of the author's;
- (B) review literature from varied sources from a disparate variety of authors, time periods, cultures and philosophical perspectives;
- (C) identify themes within readings which relate to the broader concept of "humanity" and "the humanities;"
- (D) develop a personal philosophical perspective, informed by his or her study of such concepts of virtue,



beauty, justice, reason, self and the "other"

(2) The student will demonstrate understanding of research methods and/or technologies used in research in the humanities. The student is expected to:

- (A) develop an understanding of the requirements and practices of university-level research, analysis and writing;
- (B) simulate the methods and/or technologies used in the research process particular to the Humanities; and
- (C) review and revise, as well as participate in the creation of new editing techniques, papers, artistic representations, and group projects.

(3) The student will develop products that meet standards of university-level humanities courses. The student is expected to:

- (A) collaborate with his or her peers and instructors to create a variety of analytical products;
- (B) develop a plan for project completion through collaboration with peers and instructors;
- (C) develop assessment criteria for successful analysis of selected works;
- (D) interpret the concept of propriety in terms of the socio-historical climate within which the works were created, as well as in contemporary society.

Description of the specific student needs this course is designed to meet:

The Liberal Arts & Science Academy is a comprehensive college preparatory high school that seeks to give its students a firm foundation in both the sciences and the liberal arts. The course will be required of all sophomore LASA students, and will match with the already existing Planet Earth course, which teaches data gathering and research within the sciences. Within all of the core classes at LASA, a set of skills related to writing, academic researching, long-term project planning, and group work are taught. The humanities class will provide the final necessary course to teach these skills within an educational context, with a particular emphasis on research. Finally the course will allow students to grapple with ideas represented across a broad spectrum of cultures and media. It will also provide a foundation as to the ideas great thinkers and artists have grappled with themselves and allow students to bring these ideas into their other courses, enriching their overall education. For students who are more scientific in their dispositions, the course will provide an essential education in the arts that they may not receive otherwise.

Major resources and materials to be used in the course:

- Slide projector or LCD projector
- Access to computer laboratory with internet connection for research days
- An anthology of literature (Norton or some other)
- An anthology of major philosophical thought (Ariew and Watkins or some other)
- An anthology of art history (Gardner's or some other)
- Access to slides of major artwork for this unit (on the internet)
- Access to research materials (provided by AISD in the form of Gale Groups, the Austin Public Library System, the University of Texas Library system, and such internet database sites as Voice of the Shuttle)
- Various individual texts in the humanities. (Not all texts will be taught in any given year.)

Required activities and sample optional activities to be used:

- Reading one major work and several supplemental works per six weeks unit, to be drawn from the list above.
- Listening to at least one work per six weeks unit.
- Watching at least one film or live dramatic performance per six weeks unit.
- Examining at least one type of visual art per six weeks unit.
- Regular class and small group discussions.
- Student study and production of criticism across various media (literature, philosophy, psychology, film, visual art, music, architecture).
- Student creative projects--production of artwork, mini-architectural projects, music, film, performance, poetry, and prose writings (literary, philosophical, historical, etc.) (See below for examples).
- Regular response journals that give students both practice in formal analytic writing and a forum for more subjective responses to texts.
- Regular internet and library research to produce mini- research projects.
- Guest speakers from the community who are experts in particular areas of classroom study to supplement the teacher’s knowledge.
- Three weeks of intensive research at the end of the course to culminate in the production of the major research project .(See below, under “methods for evaluating”).

Some examples of particular student activities include:

- A field trip to the Blanton Museum (modern art) to complete an analytical “scavenger hunt.”
- A field trip to the Perry Castaneda Library on the University of Texas campus to research the final course project.
- A photo essay pairing quotes from a text being studied (*Othello*, in previous semesters) with pictures taken by the students, and including written analysis of how each photo symbolizes some aspect of the quote.
- A poem written to accompany a particular piece of artwork. Reproduction of a famous portrait using the student as a stand-in for the portrait model (in order to encourage students to notice details in art).

Methods for evaluating student outcomes:

The class will end with a summative project in which students identify a set of binary ideas operating within their own societies, and, using multiple disciplines of the humanities (literature, philosophy, art and art history, theater, film, music, etc.), explore how their binary has played a role in shaping current thought. This project will include a formal paper utilizing the research methods that they have learned throughout the semester, and a multi-media presentation of their conclusions.

Teacher Qualifications:

Teachers must be certified in the area of English for grades 8-12. Additional experience with art history, music,



psychology, or history is recommended, but no official certification is necessary in these areas.

Additional information (optional):

- 1) This is one of four “core” courses required by the Liberal Arts and Science Academy. At the freshman level, two core courses ask students to take ownership of their own critical thinking and problem solving projects. At the sophomore level, this course asks students to take charge of gathering their knowledge on a subject in the humanities, while its partner course asks students to do the same for the sciences.
- 2) This course goes beyond the basic skills taught by the TEKS to teach (and require) upper-level college research.
- 3) This course is designed to be interdisciplinary.
- 4) This course aligns with skills and subject matter being taught in English and history classes at the tenth-grade level.

Original course creator: Austin Independent School District