

HUM-SST 295-01: THE POLITICS OF HUMAN THRIVING

FALL 2017  GRINNELL COLLEGE

CALEB ELFENBEIN

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OFFICE HOURS:

WEDNESDAY 1-2 (GRILL)

FRIDAY 9-10 (OFFICE)

What does it mean to live beyond mere existence—to thrive as a human being? What are the different factors we should take into account when identifying what constitutes human thriving? Who occupies social positions that empower them to answer these questions for others? What are the implications for how they might go about answering them? This course, tied to the 2017-2018 Center for the Humanities annual theme, the Politics of Human Thriving, will explore these questions from a variety of perspectives. Topics throughout the year will include belonging, sexual violence, race, gender, and the intersection of arts and activism. Students will read and discuss selections from visiting scholars and will attend related Humanities Center programming.

COURSE POLICIES

My baseline expectation is that you will attend each class session prepared for discussion and that you will attend each Humanities Center-sponsored public event. If you are unable to attend in person, it is your responsibility to watch a recording of the event. If you are unable to attend a class session because of a school-related commitment, I ask that you let me know well in advance so that we can make alternate arrangements. If I do not hear from you and you are not in class I will assume you are simply skipping, which will affect your final course grade.

It is essential to me that everyone in the class has the same opportunity to thrive. The Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources typically communicates with faculty about student accommodations in advance, though not every student with specific needs has already put them on file with the College. We will work to ensure you get the most out of this learning experience.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

You have two core responsibilities for the course: (1) doing the assigned readings, which the speakers themselves have recommended as appropriate introductions to their work, and (2) attending the public events. All readings are available via electronic reserve. You will also be responsible for keeping a weekly course journal, which only you and I will see. Your entries should relate the material under consideration (whether readings or speaker events) to the core questions of the course (as stated above). Personal reflection is most welcome as part of that work. For class sessions during which we discuss the upcoming speaker's/speakers' work, you will also be responsible for preparing two questions that you would like to ask during the public event Q & A.

Your grade will reflect your engagement with the course (attendance and preparation for class, attendance of public events) and your weekly journal. Each entry should be 250-300 words. Your final entry, offering reflections on the course as a whole, should be 500 words.

CLASS SESSIONS

We are a big class. You will sign up for one of two groups. We will start out each class together. Then, in alternating fashion from one class meeting to another, one group will meet with me for the

first part of our class session while the other completes group work assignments. We will then close out each class session by coming back together again.

MEETING DATES

Friday, August 25

- Introductions

Friday, September 8

- Discuss Mohja Kahf ("Kahf_Creative Lif_OCR, Kahf. M_reading_OCR")

Monday, September 11

- Mohja Kahf event

Tuesday, September 19*

- Mohja Kahf follow-up (11 a.m., JRC 101; lunch included)

Friday, September 29

- Discuss Sharon Block ("Block_Lines of Color_OCR, Block_MakingMeaningfulBodies_OCR, Block_TakingOverMPWH_OCR")

Friday, October 6

- Discuss Ladelle McWhorter ("McWhorter_Two Great Dangers_OCR, McWhorter_Where do white people come from_OCR")

Friday, October 27

- Revisit Block and McWhorter

Wednesday, November 1

- Block and McWhorter Event

November 3

- Block and McWhorter follow-up

November 10: Wrap-Up