

HONORS 201

INQUIRIES IN EARLIEST CULTURES TO CA. 500 CE

BSU, Spring 2026,
Syllabus¹

Meetings: TR 11–12:15

Place:

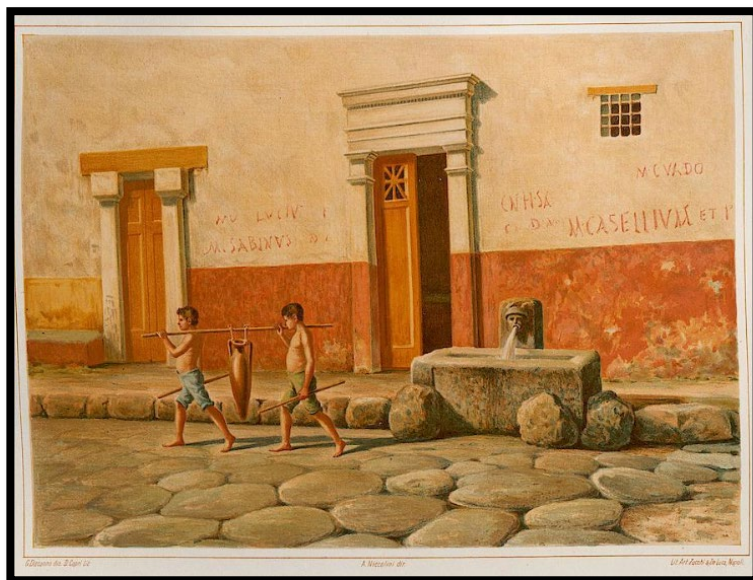
Professor: Dr. Bart Huelsenbeck

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Office Hours: TBD

email: bahuelsenbec@bsu.edu

(Mon–Fri, I can usually respond
within 24 hrs)



Niccolini, *Le case ed i monumenti di Pompei disegnati e descritti*, Naples, 1896.

Course Description:

Wisdom and Her Daughters. “It is bad when one thing becomes two.” The focus of this section of HONR 201 is wisdom. Ancient stories often communicate hard-won lessons. They aim to teach. They pass down knowledge for the ages. In early antiquity, this kind of wisdom is all-embracing—touching on subjects as diverse as philosophy, science, religion, and the arts. Over time, the pursuit of wisdom becomes more systematic and specialized. A wisdom that was once one thing becomes many. In this course, we will explore the evolution of wisdom as expressed in stories, religious and philosophical texts, and other media. Some of our themes and questions: What are the results, both positive and negative, of wisdom’s evolution? How do we define knowledge? How should it be used and communicated?

Course Objectives

1. Students will identify and explain the most important themes, ideas, and viewpoints that appear in multiple ancient sources.
2. Students will draw connections among the several sources (literature, architecture, art, etc.) that we shall examine, and synthesize these connections into new understandings of core ideas and attitudes of the ancient world.
3. Students will tell basic facts about the originating context of an ancient work (its author, his/her biography, when and how it was made, who the audience was, etc.).

¹ This syllabus is subject to change.

4. In the case of works of historiography, students will be able to give a basic narrative of the events described.
5. Students will draw connections and make comparisons between ancient cultural artifacts and the modern age (events, art, people, etc.).
6. Students will demonstrate effective, refined writing skills.

Assignments and assessment tools align with objectives in the following ways:

- Objectives 1, 2, and 5 will be satisfied through student-led discussions.
- Objectives 1–4, and to a lesser extent Objective 5, will be satisfied through quizzes and the Midterm.
- Objectives 2, 5, and 6 will be met through the essay assignment.
- Objectives 2, 5, and 6 will be satisfied through weekly writings (Reflection Boards).

University Core Curriculum Goals partially met by this class.

- To engage in lifelong education by learning to acquire knowledge and to use it for intelligent ends.
- To communicate at a level acceptable for college graduates.
- To clarify your personal values and be sensitive to those held by others.
- To recognize and seek solutions for the common problems of living by drawing on a knowledge of historical and contemporary events and the elements of the cultural heritage related to those events.
- To assess your unique interests, talents, and goals and choose specialized learning experiences that will foster their fulfillment.

HONRS 201 fulfills the UCC Humanities Tier-2 requirement. Holistically, the three-course Humanities Sequence enables students to achieve many of the UCC learning outcomes. HONRS 201 provides an effective context to address the Humanities tier-2 outcomes, as articulated below. In the transformation from information to knowledge, the course enables students to:

- Analyze and synthesize elements from various sources (literature, the fine arts and material culture) to create new understandings of the core ideas and attitudes of cultures from earliest antiquity to late antiquity (ca. 500 CE).
- Form knowledge both independently and collaboratively within a student centered, student driven, exploratory learning environment.
- Communicate their knowledge through well-crafted discussions, writings, presentations, and projects.

HONRS 201 also fulfills the Writing designation for the UCC-21 core curriculum.

Required books (please use these translations and editions):

1. Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin). ISBN: 9780140275360.
2. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. Benjamin Foster (Norton). ISBN: 9780393643985.
3. *The Older Sophists*, R.K. Sprague, ed. (Hackett). ISBN: 9780872205567.
4. *Plato, Protagoras and Meno*, trans. A. Beresford (Penguin). ISBN: 9780140449037.

Assessment

- 15% Participation and preparedness (= timely completion of daily assignments: readings, and other assignments). *Note that to earn 100% of this component of your grade, it is not enough simply to attend all classes.*
- 10% Student-led discussion
- 15% Reflection Board posts
- 20% Quizzes: identification, short answer, short essay.
- 20% Midterm: short answer, short essay.
- 20% Essay

Grade scale

100–93 A, 92–90 A-, 89–87 B+, 86–83 B, 82–80 B-, 79–77 C+, 76–73 C, 72–70 C-, 69–67 D+, 66–63 D, 62–60 D-, 59–0 F

Method

The class is discussion-based. *I* come to class with certain facts, ideas, analysis, and perspectives that I shall present and/or raise for discussion. *You* come to class, having done the assignment and prepared to share your reactions and careful reflections. These reflections—both mine and yours together—form the basis of class discussion.

***Electronic devices.** Please do not use these during class. Speak to me if there are extenuating circumstances that might necessitate their use during class.

Participation and preparedness. Participation is required. Be advised that ABSENTEEISM WILL LOWER YOUR GRADE. You cannot participate, if you do not attend.

Make-up Policy

Make-up quizzes and tests will be given only in cases of unavoidable necessity. If you have an important engagement that you absolutely **MUST** attend (birthdays, graduation parties, vacations, etc. do not qualify), please inform me as early as possible. **I do not accept extra credit work. Please do not ask.**

Late Assignments

The general rule for late assignments is that they are penalized by 10–15% for every day submitted past the due date. This is only a general rule. Circumstances may dictate a reduction of points

greater or less than 10–15%. After two days past the due date, the assignment will receive a zero unless the student has made arrangements with me.

Student-led Discussion

Task: Present to the class on a topic or topics that complement the current class material. In order to be able to **bring something new** to the discussion, I recommend doing some research online or in the library: remember to cite all sources! You should talk with me about your choice of topic well in advance of the day of discussion. Length of presentations vary. As a general guide, they should be longer than 5 minutes and shorter than 30 minutes. You may lose points if too short or too long.

What to do:

1. Draw up a list of topics or observations, relevant to the current material, that you believe are significant. Explain these observations to the class. Don't make the list too long or too short. You should have at least three topics/observations. **5 points**
 - **Bring something NEW to our discussion! Do not simply summarize a reading assignment.**
 - Do not repeat! Observations should not simply repeat what's been said in class or analyze material that has already been analyzed. Observations may connect to a recent Reflection Board post, but they should not simply duplicate what was written there.
 - Use formal speech in your presentation.
2. Draw a connection (at least one) with previous class material. **1 point**
3. Pose questions (at least two) to the class. **2 points**
4. Use a visual (e.g. handout, slides) in support of your discussion. This need not be elaborate, but it should be well organized and carefully edited. *Via email, you must send me a copy of the visual at least one hour before the class meeting of your presentation.* **2 points**

*If you consult outside material (Internet, written sources, etc.), **you MUST use a GOOD, authoritative source: do not rely on content aggregators, SparkNotes, undergraduate papers, and other similar Internet sources.** You MUST cite your sources (e.g. by including a bibliography on a final slide of a presentation)!

**You're responsible for signing up for your student-led discussion. This must be done well in advance of the discussion date, and your chosen date must receive my approval.

Reflection Board. When assigned, you are to write up your reflections on the current material and post these to Canvas. I will offer further guidance as to topics on Canvas. General guidelines appear below.

- Each write-up must contain a minimum of 350 words (unless stated otherwise).
- Post your write-up to Canvas—due by the beginning of the class period of the day listed on the assignment schedule. Do not attach a document; post your text directly on the Canvas

forum.

- Generally, *you* will come up with the topic yourself, within the following guidelines:
 - Your comments must relate to one or more assignments due recently and/or class discussions. Do not write about any random topic! Typically I will state in the forum what the limits of the topic are.
 - Give explicit statement(s) as to *what the topic is* that you've chosen.
 - Your reflections must include *your own* reactions and thoughts: *do not simply summarize or paraphrase what you've read/seen*.
 - You may also respond to a classmate's post—but you must include reference to something in the material beyond what is in the original post.
- Grading. You will receive a 100% for completing the assignment in the manner prescribed here. If you do not complete the entire assignment, you will receive a percentage according to what is done correctly.
 - If your writing is not on topic, or does not follow guidelines stated here and in the online forum, you will lose points (the amount depending on how often you write off topic on posts).

Academic Integrity

Cheating, in any form, will not be tolerated. The use of AI technology for writing is forbidden. All work that you submit for this course must be your own. When you draw on the works of others, you must cite them. You may not submit for this class work that you have done in other contexts (e.g. for another class). If you submit work that is not your own, you will receive an F on the assignment and other, graver consequences may follow.

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services](#) office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.