HUM 250, Introduction to Interdisciplinary Humanities
Learning and Curricular Objectives

HUM 250 was created as an introduction to interdisciplinary study in the humanities for students who major or minor in Humanities. The course requires students to become acquainted with the basic visual art, literary, and musical forms—e.g., a novel, a symphony—that they will study throughout their curriculum, and also to begin exploring the possibilities and the problems inherent to interdisciplinarity in the humanities.

The course is also an occasion to give students an overview of the major, including some of the practicalities of working their way through the curriculum. The instructor for the course meets at least once with each student that intends to pursue the major (minors and unaffiliated students are invited to have such a meeting) in order to assess the student's larger educational and career objectives with the major, to provide direction or counsel as appropriate, to determine with the student a suitable emphasis, and to point the student towards the faculty member assigned to that emphasis area. In some instances, this advisement helps a student recognize that they would be able to meet their educational goals better in a single-discipline major.

HUM 250 is numbered the way it is for two reasons:

- Many majors and minors do not begin their university experience with the intention to study Humanities. A significant number come to the major after having taken other 100-or 200-level Humanities courses: some from HUM 101 (an introductory course for non-majors that satisfies a University Core Arts requirement); but more from HUM 201 and/or 202, Western Civilization courses for both majors and for students seeking to satisfy University Core Civlization, Letters, or Arts requirements. Consequently, the number 250 recognizes that for many students this course follows 200-level courses of a lesser number. **It is, however, our intention to have students take this course at the beginning of their major or minor coursework. In fact, completing the course is requisite for students to be able to officially declare the major.**

- We wanted to align HUM 250 with HUM 350, the theory and methodology course majors are required to take before they enroll in their senior seminar/capstone courses. HUM 250 prepares students for HUM 350's more careful study of the theories of interpretation in the humanities.

Students who take this course typically study a novel or several short stories; a variety of poetic forms or a substantial work of one poet; a play and or a film (including performance aspects of the work); a philosophical essay; a variety of paintings, sculptures, and architecture, or a substantial sample of the works of a particular painter, sculptor, and architect; a symphony or concerto; and a substantial work of vocal or dance music (opera, oratorio, ballet, etc.). In this course the students engage these works both as examples of their type, and also as material that provides them with the chance to make productive interdisciplinary connections.

The course should conclude with a brief introduction to the kinds of interdisciplinary research that are performed in the discipline:

- Theoretical explorations into how humanistic media, genres, and forms compare and interrelate, both to build better understanding of the differences and similarities of individual types of cultural production and genres (e.g., the use of "perspective" in a novel and a painting), and also to give insight into the creative and intellectual purposes of specific artists and texts.
- Examination of the literary, visual, and musical productions of the culture of a particular time and/or region in order to ascertain a reliable sense of what is important to that culture.
- Investigation of the cross-disciplinary backgrounds to or influences on the work of a particular writer, artist, or composer.

Students in this course, however, should not be expected to produce substantive work in such interdisciplinary research. Work of this kind occurs in HUM 350 and the senior seminars. Writing assignments in HUM 250 should emphasize close critical readings of particular works and should ask the students to use the proper vocabulary of literary and visual analysis. This course, however, does not provide an advanced knowledge of technical music analysis. Instead, music is treated more broadly in its cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts. 25-30 pages (double-spaced) of critical, interpretive writing should be required of all students.

When they have completed this course, students should be able to:

1. Know and implement in critical writing assignments the "basics" of discerning and analyzing form, meaning, and significance in:

- literature, including prose fiction, poetry, drama/film
- visual art, including painting, sculpture, architecture
- a philosophical essay
- music, including instrumental and vocal or dance music (this does not necessarily include a mature technical understanding of music)

2. Have an introductory knowledge of the different kinds of interdisciplinary work performed in the discipline

3. Begin the process of structuring and focusing course work to achieve educational and career goals, including the selection of a particular emphasis area.