

February, 17

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Humanities House: Living the Western Tradition

A Living and Learning Center program proposal submitted by: Spencer Tubbs & Mathew Mason

Program Directors

Mathew Mason, 2013
College of Arts & Sciences
Latin

Spencer Tubbs, 2013
College of Arts & Sciences
Religion

Overview

In the Humanities House program, we will expand our knowledge and familiarity with the key figures, beliefs, and ideas behind the western tradition. Moreover, we will become aware of its inherent usefulness and versatility in everyday life, from social situations to current events. Through weekly discussions, informal conversations, and goal-oriented projects, we hope to emphasize not only the individuals in our program, but material we can create as a group for the outside community. The Living and Learning Center provides a residential space where we can exchange viewpoints from variety people of different ages and outlooks, not only amongst our program, but others as well. We think this kind of environment will allow for a flourishing of the Humanities in the lives of our members, supplemented by both academic learning and social encouragement in this theme.

Learning Objective 1

Each member will be able to articulate and discuss the ideas, works, and repercussions of 30 individuals of the Western Tradition as defined by the Humanities as an intellectual pursuit. Each of these figures will represent a major ideology or movement. We believe that 30 major figures will be a sufficient number to properly inform and generate discussion amongst members over two semesters of investigation. We intend to study 15 figures per semester (approx. 1 per week).

Action Steps:

- 1. Members of the program will read the same material concerning the 30 major figures.** We will be using important texts by these main authors to read and interpret. We hope to use the Bailey/Howe Library order find specific physical texts without the need of a funding request. We will find it useful to have a binder containing a list of the texts by the chosen figures available at the Bailey/Howe in our suite for reference. We also intend to use online resources whenever possible for simultaneous use. However, for some of the more important authors it may be necessary to purchase some texts to have available permanently in the suites.
 - a.** (The binder necessary for the reference list will be required and will cost approximately \$4.00)
 - b.** We suggest a funding request of approximately \$100 for the purchasing of necessary texts to have permanently available in the suites. This should cover 5-10 texts)

2. **Members of the program will participate in weekly discussion groups with emphasis on current events.** These discussions will have three main parts.
 - a. Opinions and ideas from the selected figure of the week will be discussed during the first section.
 - b. The second section will consist of synthesizing this figure's ideas with current events of the week in order to demonstrate the applicability of the Humanities in daily life.
 - i. (For the second section we will require subscriptions to a periodical. Namely, a subscription to *The Economist*. This will cost approximately \$127)
 - c. The third section of the discussion will be a more flexible portion that will allow for more general discussion, synthesis with formerly read figures, and **Learning Objective 2**. In this section, there will also be a strong focus on connecting the cultural events that we have attended to the Humanities.

Learning Objective 2

Each member will learn of the background, biography, influence and repercussions of one major figure and present them during an allotted time. The other members of the program thus will benefit from these in-depth investigations. Furthermore, this experience will allow members to express their own creativity through the Humanities.

Action Steps:

1. **Every other week, during section three of the weekly discussion group, a member will present their newfound knowledge.**
 - a. Members will have 20+ topics to choose from in order to focus their presentation. Members will also have the ability to independently choose a topic with Program Director approval.
 - b. Each presentation should provide a succinct background on their figure and topic.
 - c. Each presentation should outline the influences on and of their topic.
 - d. During their presentation, members should explore how this figure and topic has influenced their perspective on life. This portion of the presentation can be used to demonstrate their perspective in a creative way.
2. **Each member can utilize resources available at the library and online to assemble their presentation.**
3. **Members are encouraged to attend two cultural events (per semester) here on campus that could be connected to their personal presentation.**

Many on-campus events are free and educational. We have in mind any Classical music performance presented by the UVM Music Department (Especially the Lane Series productions or Tom Simone's Humanities-themed concerts featuring Faculty pianist Paul Orgel), UVM Theater productions (this current semester the UVM Theater is performing Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*), Visual Arts exhibits (Most likely from the Fleming Museum or L/L Gallery openings), or one of the many L/L cultural events offered each semester in the Fire Place Lounge.

Furthermore, we will highly encourage as many members as possible to attend these events together as a group. This will create a unified experience and common group discussion before and after the event. Additionally, this will allow for program members to experience the artistic reality of a specific program member's presentation.
4. **We will attend two professional cultural events over the course of the year to enhance our understanding of the connections between the creative arts and the ideas of the Western Tradition.** We will be attending an event in downtown Burlington. This will be a relevant professional

theater or music production at the Flynn Theater. This year, for instance, the Flynn put on a production of Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist as well as frequent performances by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. (For admission to this event we will require around \$15 per member. This will cost approximately \$360 for the year)

Learning Objective 3

Together, in medium sized groups, members will cultivate an informed opinion concerning a current event or contemporary cultural phenomenon using the ideas of the Humanities. Members will create an innovative method by which each group may share this informed perspective with the L/L and UVM community.

Action Steps:

1. **These mediums sized groups (5-6 people) will meet every other week, for a minimum of 2 hours, where they will generate their opinions and method of delivery.** We will encourage the use of pamphlets as a method of delivery to the community at large. This is because pamphlets are physical manifestations of our member's thoughts and opinions. From ancient times pamphlets have been used to efficiently proliferate ideas of the Humanities in an articulate fashion. (We expect that paper and printing costs for the entire year will require run in the area of \$240)

In terms of structural format, pamphlets are often very aesthetically pleasing. In some ways pamphlets are advertisements in the way they draw attention to themselves. Quite like daily newspapers, a creative and enlightening pamphlet could pass from friend to friend very quickly. The original manuscript will either be handwritten or printed in a manner which reflects this artistic aspect of pamphleteering. Calligraphy for instance is one option. This original will be copied and printed for distribution to the L/L community and the greater public.

In these pamphlets we will address a Humanities idea in relation to a relevant issue in the world or even on-campus, which we discussed in our medium sized groups.

Community based interaction brings our program into contact with other programs and the UVM community. We have felt strongly that this type of community action in relation to our humanities knowledge. This is mostly due the fact that the IHP has a strong academic bent. We hope that through a mix of community interaction and group development we will create a beneficial impact on the L/L community. As such, we believe that the Humanities House will occupy its own unique and important role within the L/L community.

We have noticed that there are very few student-opinion pieces written for the general public here on campus, besides those published by the two student newspapers. Our pamphlet will offer an opinion of current affairs from a different perspective than those already in circulation. The humanities broaden an individual's perspective of world. With just this intention, our community projects intend to engage the general public by providing different ways of looking at the life.

We intend to demonstrate these ideas and opinions at least once per semester.

2. **Members will work individually on their project for review and discussion during the meetings every other week.**
3. **For this community project, we hope to enlist the aid of a professor in the Humanities who can offer suggestions and constructive criticisms on this matter.** These include the professors of the Integrated Humanities Program (Prof. Sugarman, Prof. Simone, Prof. Hutton, Prof. Grimmer) as well as our advisor Prof. Barnaby (Director of the Humanities), who has already consented to this project.

Community Service:

We hope to work with Professor Andrew Barnaby of the Humanities Center in his program to teach the Humanities to High school students of the Old North End.

We also hope to interact with the children of the L/L daycare facility by teaching them foundational myths of the Western Tradition. We would like to read myths aloud in a story-telling format.

Planning Timeline:

See attached Timeline

Program Advisor:

Professor Andrew Barnaby of the English department and Humanities Center has agreed to serve as our advisor for this program. He is well versed in the Humanities and is currently the initiator of the upcoming Humanities Major here at the university. As an advocate for the rebirth of interest in the Humanities, Professor Barnaby has particular concern for the efflorescence of our program.

Special Facilities:

None

Housing:

We intend to have a 50-50 male to female ratio. This however, is based on the pool of applicants. If we could request a specific location in the L/L, it would be either in E Building in the Arts Initiative or in D building.

Plans for Interacting with other L/L Programs:

We would love to work in conjunction with several L/L programs for specific events. We hope to hold a specialized film event with The Interpreting Film suite, concerning the life of a Humanities figure or a film that is influenced by the ideas in the humanities. For example, last year a movie was produced concerning the life of Leo Tolstoy. Working with the Interpreting Film suite will allow us explore a technical view of the film while we lend them a Humanities analysis. We may want to do a pre-film lecture or discussion. Ongoing interaction with the Integrated Humanities Program will be fantastic. Though the IHP program does not strongly emphasize interaction with other programs, we hope that members of their large

community with work with us for the purpose of synthesizing ideas. Working with Theater suite would also provide an excellent opportunity to present a play or theater piece of the Western Tradition such as a small performance of Shakespeare. We are also excited about working with the Hogwarts House. J.K. Rowling fills her fictional work with many Classical Allusions. We would like to explore the Classical myths that underlie the Harry Potter novels, as these are a good example of how the humanities influence literature today. We would like to read small passages from Harry Potter and analyze them. An interaction with the Literary Appreciation or Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror in the Arts programs would be extremely conducive to learning. A book group will work fantastically for this purpose, in the same way that we hope to work with Hogwarts House.

Program Member Recruitment:

Several individuals have already expressed great interest in joining the programs. Many of their names are listed on the "Names of Students Interest in your Program" We intend to speak with the professors of IHP to inform them of the possibility of referring to us members of this years IHP program as well as those students who were unable to make the commitment to the 6 required IHP classes. If the program is accepted, we will have Professor Barnaby (Initiator of the Humanities Major) available to recommend the program to those interested in the Humanities Major. We have a variety of methods in mind to advertise for our program. However, we believe the most effective method to be the circulation of pamphlets similar to the ones discussed in **Learning Objective 3**. These will present our program in a manner well suited to our mission. It has the added aspect of being physical and portable (much like a trading card). As such, we believe that we will be able to gain interest in our program not only from the initial person we hand our pamphlet to, but also to whomever the person may pass it. We will include a thought provoking statement relevant to our mission (possibly a quote from a philosopher) and perhaps a small summary of the reason this statement may be applicable to the student body. Those affected by this statement will have reason to consider our program. We will distribute these at Humanities related events (particularly the Cultural Events discussed in **Learning Objective 2**)

We also noticed that students are particularly drawn to chalk drawings on the pavement around campus. We believe we could. Through an inspirational or interesting quote followed by the name of our program, we believe that we will be able to generate both awareness about our program and the Humanities at large. This form of recruitment will be seen by students of all areas of interest.

