

HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK

The Reign of Literature & the Arts Commences!
Blessed are those who are found studious of
Literature & Humane & polite accomplishments.
Such have their lamps burning & such shall shine as the stars.

William Blake
(1757-1827)

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the Humanities Program at Manhattan School of Music! The educational adventure opening before you promises to be especially challenging, with its rigorous demands of disciplined study and performance of your art. Successfully realizing your professional and personal aspirations will depend, to a great extent, on the resources you are able to cultivate in the years ahead at MSM. To assist you in this endeavor, the Humanities Program invites you to participate in the concentrated study of Literature, Philosophy, History, Psychology, Religion, & Art. Our hope is that movement through the varied terrain represented by the Humanities Program will enable you to emerge with a clearer understanding of the world around you and, more importantly, the world within you. In an atmosphere charged by critical discussion concentrating on seminal works in the history of Western Civilization, study in the Humanities offers you the opportunity to enhance intellectual and imaginative skills vital to your life as a musician as well as to your destiny as a creative individual. We hope that your involvement in the Humanities Program will thereby lead you to the kind of personal discovery and shared enrichment that is profoundly transformative and deeply fulfilling.

A CHALLENGING PROSPECT:

Although your professional focus might often tempt you to view the Humanities as secondary to your musical performance, we ask you to recognize that all the arts intersect on a plane of creative self-expression that is vitalizing and immensely valuable. From this perspective, it becomes easier to harmonize the study of Music with the study of the Humanities, to recognize that they both nourish creativity and foster personal development. Moreover, since the mind tends to work more effectively when it is engaged on several fronts rather than when it is too exclusively focused on one subject, the study of Humanities offers students a chance to exercise their creative energies in a venue distinct from, but integrally related to, the study of Music. To those students who resist movement beyond Music, we ask you to recognize that the process by which insights are gained and lives are transformed through contact with the great writers of the past is a process that, like all creative processes, possesses an element of mystery. One

cannot precisely define how an understanding of the Romantic Movement conveyed through the Humanities Lecture Series, or an exploration of Hamlet's spiritual crisis directed in the Humanities Seminar, will foster personal advancement. Indeed, it might take some time for the vision that is generated by these educational experiences to crystallize in an enlightening and personally significant way, as one advances toward intellectual maturity. To have confidence in this process, greeting it with all of one's imaginative resources, is perhaps the most important opportunity facing the MSM student in the Humanities Program.

THE HUMANITIES CORE: SEMINARS & LECTURES

As part of the Unified Core Curriculum, the Humanities Core is an integral component of study at MSM, situated alongside Music History and Music Theory as central educational experiences for the conservatory student. Study in the Humanities Core includes a four-semester sequence of Core Seminars—*The Wellsprings of Western Thought*, *The Questing Self*, *Rebels & Revolutions*, and *The Artist & Society*—as well as a complementary set of Lectures entitled *The Progress of Western Civilization*. The Lectures survey the development of Western Civilization from the Ancient World to the New Millennium, providing students with an overview of Western cultural accomplishment. The Core Seminars are the key component of the Humanities program, organized thematically, surveying the seminal literary works of the Western tradition, and offering students the opportunity to charge their voices with eloquence and insight while formulating a viable personal philosophy. Working in concert to achieve these goals, the Core Seminars and Lectures direct students to some of the most significant historical events, celebrity figures, and literary works that have shaped the West, in an effort to foster intellectual debate and stimulate evaluation of the rich cultural legacy that constitutes the Western tradition. Examination of selected literary works is supplemented by an interdisciplinary, multimedia approach that imports representative musical selections, historical and biographical documentary videos, slides of artworks and architecture, photography, drama and film into the classroom to achieve our goals.

THE HUMANITIES CORE SEMINARS

The Humanities Core Seminars are designed to initiate collective inquiry into the ideas that have shaped cultural expression in the West. Through close reading and discussion of seminal texts ranging from Homeric epic to postmodern literature, the Core Seminars enable students to respond critically and creatively, in conversation and in writing, to representative works of the Western tradition. The communal endeavor of these seminars will help students develop the skills of critical thinking, effective writing, persuasive argument, and creative expression they will need to advance their careers and enhance their personal lives. Indeed, the Humanities Seminar classroom might well be the only place in the music conservatory where students are able to address issues and personal concerns vital to their success as artists, their development as individuals, and their participation in society. The Core Seminars commence with the study of masterworks from Ancient Greece and the Bible in *The Wellsprings of Western Thought*, continue with a survey of the individual's quest for fulfillment in representative literary works from the Middle Ages to the present in *The Questing Self*,

focus on politically charged texts from the Renaissance to the present in *Rebels & Revolutions*, and conclude with an evaluation of the artistic imagination in *The Artist & Society*. This focus on Western Literature is enriched by an interdisciplinary, multimedia approach that enables the arts to supplement and reinforce each other, thereby affording students opportunities to make significant connections between various forms of cultural expression recognizable as working in concert.

THE HUMANITIES LECTURES

In conjunction with the Humanities Core Seminars, the Humanities Lecture Series—entitled *The Progress of Western Civilization*-- offers students a survey of Western Civilization from Classical Antiquity to the present, so they might better understand and appreciate the cultural heritage that has shaped the Western consciousness in which they are participating. The lectures focus upon the most prominent historical events and celebrity figures in the development of the West in order to provide students with a sense of the social, economic, and political forces, as well as the philosophical and artistic visions, that have directed the advance of Western civilization. The overview offered by the lectures is intended to display how the intellectual and imaginative energies that have propelled Western Civilization forward are rooted in material conditions, transformed by historical pressures, and expressed in the creative achievements that constitute the Western tradition.

Unlike the Humanities Core seminars, which are arranged thematically, the lectures move chronologically in their study of Western Civilization, on a track parallel to (but not exactly synchronized with) both Music History and Music Theory. The 4-semester lecture sequence is divided along the following lines: *Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance; Reformation, Baroque & Enlightenment; The Age of Revolution & The Rush Toward Modernity; The Contours of the Modern World*. As a survey of Western cultural history, the lectures provide students with a fundamental knowledge that will facilitate comprehension of material presented throughout the Unified Core.

HUMANITIES ELECTIVES

The Humanities Electives are designed to meet the special interests of students who have completed the Humanities Core and are seeking a more interdisciplinary, multicultural focus for their studies. The electives enable students to work with a teacher who is presenting his or her field of expertise in a highly charged seminar format that invites in-depth consideration of a particular subject. For example, students may opt to study The Short Story, American History, Asian Religion, Romantic Art & Literature, or Art History, to name just a few of our current elective offerings. Additionally, Elementary French, German, and Italian courses are available as Humanities Electives. And for those students who wish to move beyond the courses offered at MSM, our cross-registration option with Barnard College at Columbia University enables students to meet their Humanities Elective requirements by enrolling in certain Barnard courses. In all of these cases, the combination of student impulse and faculty expertise makes the experience of the Humanities Electives particularly exciting and enriching for the entire class.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & THE STUDY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

It should be noted that our focus on *Western Civilization* in the Humanities Core is not intended to be exclusive of the rich cultural achievement of Non-Western cultures. The rationale for commencing the Humanities Program with the study of Western Literature and Western cultural history is that such a program offers students a basis for understanding not only the culture they are participating in by virtue of their location in New York and in America, but also the musical repertoire most often encountered by the conservatory student. Additionally, it serves as a point of departure for more expansive study of other cultures made available in several of the Humanities Electives. Nor is the presentation of Western Civilization meant to be uncritical. We present the central works and events of Western cultural history not to secure approval and celebration, but to promote *critical* evaluation, to enable students to recognize both the creative brilliance and the tragic destruction that often accompanied the progress of Western Civilization

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & THE CHALLENGE OF ENGLISH

The Humanities Department is sensitive to the unique needs of the large population of International Students at MSM. We appreciate the challenge many face in meeting the demands of an MSM education conducted in English, and we admire your ability to negotiate between two languages and two cultures as you move within the MSM community. Of course, we also wish to alert you to the need for disciplined study in the Humanities Core if you hope to emerge from your educational experience with a degree of fluency and understanding in the English language. Whether you arrive from the American Language Program at Columbia University or directly from a country in which English was not your native language, our goal is to enable you to communicate effectively in English by the end of your studies in the Humanities Core. To assist you in this task, and to facilitate the transition from your native language to English, we offer Humanities Core seminars specially designed for Non-Native Speakers in the first year of the Core (Non-Native Humanities I & Humanities II). By the end of the first year, students in Non-Native Humanities will join the mainstream Core to continue with Humanities III & IV.

The ESL director also offers a special bridge course offered in the spring semester, entitled *Fundamentals of Writing*, designed to enhance reading and writing skills and to thereby prepare students for more intensive study in the Humanities Core.

NB! At any point in your studies, should you experience difficulty understanding what you have read or what you have heard in classroom discussion, please inform your instructor so that he or she might clarify the material for you. Additionally, if you are having problems with the writing or rewriting of an essay, arrange for a conference with your instructor.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Under special circumstances in which students need or wish to pursue a Humanities project on a one to one basis with a teacher who has agreed to supervise the student's work, the student may petition the Registrar's Office and the Dean of Academics & Students for approval of the project. These projects offer students the opportunity to create and complete a research project on topics not offered in MSM courses. If you choose to pursue such an Independent Study, you must work out the terms of your project with the individual Humanities instructor and secure the approval of the Department Chair, the Registrar, and the Dean of Academics & Students. Students are allowed one such independent study project per degree. Independent study projects usually carry one or two credits and include five hours of one-on-one advisement.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Transfer students who wish to receive Humanities credit for college courses they have taken elsewhere should make an appointment to discuss their situation with the Chair of the Humanities Department. Please bring a transcript, along with a course description, for each course you are hoping to transfer, in order to facilitate the evaluation of your coursework at other institutions.

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism--the presentation of someone else's ideas or words as if they were your own—is a serious offense in academic culture and public life. The establishment of the Internet as an information resource has made it particularly tempting for some students to cheat on papers by plagiarizing, presenting passages or even whole papers that have been written by someone else as if this writing were their own work. Plagiarism is a conspicuous violation of academic honesty that compromises your personal integrity, undermines your relationship with your teacher, and discredits your reputation in the School community. In some cases, it can lead to loss of scholarship and even expulsion.

Please resist the temptation to plagiarize that may seem appealing in a moment of fatigue or panic, as paper deadlines and exams threaten to overwhelm you—the consequences of such actions are considerably severe and most definitely not worth the risk. If you can stay focused on one of the primary goals of the Humanities Program and the educational mission of the School—to assist you in the development of a voice, a perspective, and a system of values that are genuinely your own—you will understand that such a goal can be achieved only if you are willing to work diligently and honestly at meeting the challenges before you. The rewards of such an endeavor are indeed immensely valuable, and your teachers are available to assist you in this endeavor every step of the way. Trust to your relationship with your teacher, not the impulse to cheat and misrepresent yourself, and your progress will be assured.

For further explanation of what constitutes Plagiarism, see the handouts available to you in your classes and through the Office of Student Life. If you are at all unclear about Plagiarism, speak with your instructor or the Department Chair to clarify your understanding of this serious violation of academic honesty.

OFFICE HOURS / CONFERENCES / VOICE AND EMAIL

The Humanities Office is located in Room 209. Please feel free to stop by whenever you wish to discuss any component of the Humanities Program. Check with your particular instructors to determine when they are keeping office hours so that you can arrange an appointment at a convenient time.

You can reach the Chair of the Humanities Department, Dr. John Pagano, by voice mail at x4459 and/or by email at jpagano@msmny.edu. His specific office hours will be posted each semester, but he is typically in his office, Room 209, on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

We in the Humanities Department offer this handbook as a way of familiarizing students with the nature and the purpose of Humanities study at MSM. We hope that it helps you direct your progress through the Humanities Program, and we invite you to seek us out for further discussion not only of your coursework and the Humanities Program, but also of the vocational prospects opening out for you at Manhattan School of Music.

In closing, we look forward to sharing the classroom with you in the years ahead—
All the Best in your Adventure of Self-Creation!

Dr. John Pagano, Chair
MSM Humanities Department

“Every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer.”

John Keats

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