

LS 898: Graduating Seminar

Spring 2021

Thursdays, 6:30 pm to 9:20 pm

January 7th to April 8th, 2021

Gary McCarron, Instructor

The graduating seminar is an opportunity for summing up your experiences in Graduate Liberal Studies, for reflecting on the past, and for drawing lines of connection between the various fields of study you have encountered. It is also a chance to focus your attention on the future and think about ways to apply your studies that are productive, critical, and enduring. This tension between past and future mirrors the tensions that have been central to many of your courses, and so it is to that tension, to that duality, that I want to return in the graduating seminar. We will examine several texts in detail that call to mind the troublesome ways in which we are divided beings, split between passionate inclinations and rational ambitions. How can we make sense of these tendencies in the contemporary world?

The graduating seminar consists of two parts:

Field Exam: In the brochure describing the Graduate Liberal Studies Program we are told that “The central theme of the program is an exploration of significant tensions within our intellectual culture, tensions that have historical origins and that have practical consequences in our present world.” In a 7-10 page paper, summarize your particular experience of this exploration during your time in the GLS Program.

This review of your experience of the Program will be presented to the seminar during the 1st and 2nd week of the semester and you will be assigned readings for which you lead seminar discussions.

Evaluation:

(1) This course is complete/incomplete or pass/fail as it is more conventionally known. To complete, students will write and present an essay (7 to 10 pages) focusing on how their GLS studies have enabled them to think about the various tensions and degrees of tensions that exist within intellectual thoughts and the overall human enterprise, all of which contribute to our particular time and context.

(2) The Seminar. The assigned texts address how humans create their multiple worlds and live with tensions and fragmented worlds. Each student is responsible for presenting on one seminar reading assignment.

(3) Course Readings:

a. de Assis, Machado. *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (1881). Translated by Flora Thomson-DeVeaux. Penguin Books, 2020. Paperback ISBN: **9780143135036**.

b. Ferry, Luc. *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*. Translated by Theo Cuffe. Harper-Perennial Books, 2010. Paperback ISBN: **9780062074249**.

c. Gopnik, Adam. *A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2019. Paperback ISBN: **9781541699342**.

d. Han, Byung-Chul. *Saving Beauty* (2010). Translated by DSaniel Steur. London: Polity Press, 2018. Paperback ISBN: **9781509515103**.

e. Midgley, Mary. *The Myths we Live By*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Paperback ISBN **9780415610247**.

f. Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017. Paperback ISBN **9780804190114**.

In addition to these books, other readings and articles will be made available in electronic format throughout the semester.