

Dear Humanities and Religion Students,

You're receiving this note because you are either a Major or a Minor in the Department of Global Humanities and Religions *or because you have expressed interest in our programs*. I hope this finds you each well in these challenging times.

As you're hopefully aware, we have started Phase I registration for Fall Quarter this morning! (And it will continue through the afternoon of June 23rd.) The following notes are designed to provide department-specific advising information for you, as well as some information specific to the challenges of planning for this Fall.

- (1) ADVISING.** Over the summer, the department chair takes on all advising responsibilities. This means that I will be available to work through any advising issues with you from now until September – questions about classes and programs; major or minor declarations; graduation evaluations, etc. I'll be regularly available via email, phone, and on Zoom. With questions, either reach out to the department's general email: GHR@wwu.edu OR to me personally, Prof. Lynn: Kimberly.Lynn@wwu.edu.
- (2) NEW CLASSFINDER CATEGORIES.** Some of you may already have checked Classfinder or the [Timetable of Classes](#) (links to an external site). Remember that the department offers courses called both "Humanities" (HUMA) and "Religion" (REL). For Fall, you'll find that there are new search parameters in place to help students identify the different ways in which courses will be offered Fall Quarter. And when you look at classes in the department, you'll find that some have additional explanatory notes about their hybrid approaches to the quarter. You will see on Classfinder that the university has created five different categories for the ways courses are being offered this Fall. I do want to stress that the university is identifying as "hybrid" *both* courses that will mix face-to-face and online components *and* courses that mix different online approaches (synchronous and asynchronous). You can also see the department's Fall approach on a single pdf here: [GHR Fall 2020 Course Offerings](#) (links to an external site).
- (3) HUMA AND REL IN FALL.** A few notes on the department's philosophy for Fall courses – we are so eager to be back to in person teaching, but balancing that working in a context of continuing disruption this Fall. Following what was a first-time experience of teaching remotely for most faculty in the Department of Global Humanities and Religions this Spring, faculty identified as a core value for the curriculum for this Fall making sure to create a substantial component of real-time communication and personal interaction with students in all of our Humanities (HUMA) and Religion (REL) courses. For half of the classes, faculty are seeking to hold as much as their class in person, on campus, as they can. However, with the social distancing guidelines in place, for our larger (45 student) introductory courses, this means that faculty are planning for how they can rearrange our courses in hybrid formats where class time can be used to meet smaller groups of 15 or 20 students in face-to-face discussion sections. For the other half of the classes, faculty are planning for shorter amounts of "live" online meeting time, for discussion and questions, along with reflecting, based on this quarter's experiences, how to create and curate other portions of the course online. Even the one asynchronous online course for Fall is being designed with an eye towards offering small group office hours meetings at a wide variety of times, morning and evening, to offer flexibility for student work and course schedules.

- (4) NOTES ON DEPARTMENTAL COURSES 2020-21.** The most up-to-date list of the department's course offerings for 20-21 is available here: [GHR 2020-21 Course Offerings](#) (links to an external site). Please note that the department regularly offers courses on new topics. These are numbered 290, 297, 390, 397, 490, or 497. If you have any questions about how they fit into major or minor programs, don't hesitate to reach out! We are also likely to add a few more course to Winter '21 and Spring '21, so check back for more information later in the summer! On the departmental pdfs, Classfinder, and Timetable of courses you'll see some new courses which are not listed in the university catalog. (In Fall these will be Prof. Murphy's HUMA 490 "Erotic: Imagination in Ancient/Medieval Europe" and Prof. Folk's REL 397C "American Religious Communes.")
- (5) SENIOR SEMINARS.** All four 400-level HUMA courses offered this year will count towards the senior seminar requirement in both BA programs (HUMA 422 (Gogröf, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Philosophy, Literature, and the Good Life"); 490 (Murphy, "The Erotic Imagination in Ancient and Medieval Europe"); 490 (Pearce, "The Wanderings of the Monk Xuanzang: From History to Myth to Fiction"); and 497B (Folk, "Respectable Citizens and Radical Subcultures: Conformity and Dissent in 19th Century America"). Students may take *both* HUMA 490 courses; both can count towards the senior seminar requirement.
- (6) FACULTY NOTES.** In Fall 2020, the department is delighted to welcome a new colleague – Dr. Daniel Picus, who has expertise in Religious Studies, the Ancient Mediterranean and Near East, and Jewish Studies. Dr. Michael Slouber, our South Asia expert, will be on leave in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021, but will be back in Spring 2021! While our Japan expert, Dr. Ethan Bushelle, will be on leave for one quarter, in Winter 2021. And our expert in Islam and Muslim societies, Dr. Jonathan Miran, will also be on leave for one quarter, in Spring Quarter 2021. See here for more information on department faculty: [Faculty](#) (links to an external site).
- (7) PROGRAMS/CATALOG.** A quick reminder that program information and permanent course descriptions can all be found here in the catalog: [University Catalog](#) (links to an external site).
- (8) GRADUATION PLANNING.** Looking ahead... if you are planning a Fall 2020 graduation, Friday, November 8th, will be your final deadline to file with the Registrar. Please contact the appropriate advisor at least **ten** days before the deadline.

(9) REGISTRATION SUPPORT. We know that this registration period might be particularly confusing for all of us; and we understand that students will also, as they register, likely be thinking through many complex decisions about their plans for the Fall. If you have specific questions, again please reach out the department at GHR@wwu.edu OR to the chair, Prof. Lynn at Kimberly.Lynn@wwu.edu Finally, I wanted to also explain some of the considerations that led to this decision to hold significant components of our courses online in the Fall.

The most obvious reason is, of course, that life will not be back to normal by September in all likelihood, and so our face-to-face classes would also be a dramatically different experience. When deciding on whether to opt for online or face-to-face teaching, these were some of the concerns that faced us:

- **Classroom space.** Western, to its credit, has very few large classrooms – this reality reflects a value of offering smaller classes. To hold classes safely in person, we have to maintain

6 feet of distance between all students in a classroom. Unfortunately, this makes a lot of campus classroom space unusable for our classes. For example, many classrooms that normally can fit 18-50 students, now can only fit 6-18 students per room under social distancing guidelines. And in fact there are only 35 classrooms *across all of campus* that can hold 20 or more socially-distanced students. In addition, rooms will be cleaned after each class, so that also adds further limitations to the amount of courses that can be scheduled on campus.

- **Disruption and uncertainty.** Observing social distancing in the classroom in the Fall -- for those classes with an in-person component -- is likely to involve retaining 6 feet of distance from other students and faculty, and wearing masks. The university is doing an enormous amount of planning and preparatory work to take all necessary health and safety precautions for face-to-face classes across campus in the Fall. But it is important to understand that if the public health situation worsens this Fall, that in-person classes may immediately go online, and that students who become ill or need to isolate may also need to be out of the classroom for a period of weeks in the Fall. It is important that we all prepare ourselves for some degree of added flexibility and uncertainty this Fall.

The Global Humanities and Religions department's faculty and staff have been working very hard to adapt to changing circumstance, since the end of winter quarter, and to support students. And we are very well aware that our students have been dealing with a multitude of challenging events and circumstances over these past months.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns; we are all learning to navigate this changing situation together!

Take good care,
Kimberly Lynn

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