

CLC 2109A

HUMANS IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

A Humanistic Undergraduate Course on Real-Crisis Management.

0.5 Credit

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INTRODUCTION

In this asynchronous course, you will acquire the personal skills you need to manage your life through the unpredictability of current times. Together, we will uncover and learn from the human values, behaviors, mistakes and solutions that sages, humanists and strategists have implemented and refined across cultures and geographies through some of the biggest crises in human history, including the most recent COVID-19 pandemic.

You will learn how humans before us have coped with and persevered through the most important events in human life such as death, love, war, power, loneliness, sickness, racism, meaning, and beauty in the face of major, catastrophic crisis. You will develop a set of personal critical reflection skills that have been tested through time, learning to implement them into your own life, as you walk in the footsteps of humanists that came before you.

By the end of this course you will be able to apply these critical reflection skills to your life, recognizing that “your mind will take the shape of what you frequently hold in thought, for the human spirit is colored by such impressions.”¹ Ultimately, you will be better prepared to both ask and answer for yourself critical life questions such as: What have I learned from this situation? How have I changed because of this situation? What has emerged from this experience? We will teach and encourage you to use these established set of humanistic skills in order to expand your own sense of humanity during times of personal crisis.

Organized around entertaining podcasts, important readings and exciting videos that will give you the taste of wisdom, and your own personal experiences, **HUMANS IN TIMES OF CRISIS** will provide you with the much-in-demand personal skills for a job market concerned about your human ability to help organizations sail through these uncertain times.

CLASS ORGANIZATION

This is an **asynchronous course**, i.e., there are no set times for lectures. Also, as this is a very practical course, **there are no exams**. However, there is a weekly cycle that we encourage you to prepare for and adapt to. You have the **freedom** to organize your time and the **responsibility** to keep up with your weekly work.

Activities:

Each week you will:

- Listen to a **podcast** outlining the main ideas and lessons of the week.

¹ Marcus Aurelius, Meditations.

-**Read** several texts/**watch** some videos related to the context in which specific solutions to a crisis were developed.

-Actively **practice living well** in times of crisis:

-Each week the class is divided into **Leaders** and **Learners**. If you are a Leader in week A, you will be a Learner in week B, and so on.

-**Leaders**: based on the materials, they write two original prompts (on Identifying; Applying [see below]) that will guide the Learners' writing. They will also write 1 reflection piece (200 words) on Creating [see below] as part of their **Tool for Living Well** [see below].

-**Learners**: by answering 3 prompts of their choice, they will **write 3 reflection pieces (200 words each)** that connect to the course material but also align with student learning stages: **Identifying; Applying and Creating**. Each of these pieces is called a **Tool for Living Well**.

-There will also be a voluntary online **tutorial** every week (with different times available for you to drop in) to discuss the materials and answer any questions you might have.

At the end of the course you will:

-Design your own **Student Tool Kit for Living Well**. The **Student Tool Kit for Living Well** consists of extending and harmonizing 6 of the mini tools you have developed during the course. The 6 tools will need to be designed, and refined, and the attribution and translation of the humanist traditions you have used will need to be explained. The goal is that through this process of translation and implementation of humanistic skills into *practice*, students will gain formative life skills that allow them to better cope with the unpredictability of life.

Gamification:

-The more you contribute to the class, the more choices you will have.

-You can earn "coins" by writing more prompts or developing more Tools. You can exchange those coins to gain extra points in the final mark or gain flexibility towards deadlines.

-You can exchange 10 coins for:

-2% extra points towards your final grade.

-A 2-day extension in the delivery of one of your weekly assignments.

-You can exchange 20 coins for:

-4% extra points towards your final grade.

-A 1-week extension in the delivery of your final **Student Tool Kit for Living Well**.

-You earn 10 coins by writing 3 extra Tools.

-You earn 20 coins by writing 6 extra Tools, based on content materials in the Extra Materials section of the course.

PROGRAM

This course is about **how to live well in times of crisis**. We will learn from our own human history but the goal is that you use the lessons for your own good living. We have organized the course into the different **types of solutions to crises** that we have developed across cultures, so that at the end of the course you will have a historical perspective of crises (you will be able to categorize the crises you will experience in your own life); a system to build up and apply the correct type of solution according to the type of crisis; a tool kit for living well in times of crisis.

Themes²:

1. What is a crisis? The COVID-19 crisis. How do humans cope with crisis? Types of crisis and types of solutions. What does living well mean?

SOLUTION 1: **WISDOM** (STRENGTH FROM WITHIN)

2. Confucianism and the Song Dynasty in China.
3. Marcus Aurelius' Stoic Solution.
4. Zen Buddhism on a Motorcycle.
5. Mandela's 27 years in Prison.

SOLUTION 2: **STORYTELLING** (WHO YOU BELONG TO)

6. Thomas King's Native Experience and Imagination.
7. Holocaust and Genocide.
Primo Levy's *If This is a Man*, or
Gourevitch's *I Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*.
8. The Atomic Bomb: Kenzaburo Oe's *Hiroshima Notes*.
9. The Environmental Crisis according to Ed Burtynsky's *Anthropocen. The Human Epoch*, and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

SOLUTION 3: **STRATEGY** (THE WAY)

10. How to Overcome Friction and Harness Complexity. The War Lessons by Clausewitz and Sun Tzu.
11. Organizing the World after Second World War. The Role of Institutions in Tony Judt's *Postwar*.
12. Change and Innovation according to Huawei's Ren Zhengfei.
13. Mary Beard's Sorrow into Strategy in *Women and Power. A Manifesto*.
14. Today's Geopolitics Crisis, or China and the US: Mahbubani's *Has China Won?*

² Final selection of materials will be provided in September.