Which is more valuable: knowledge or action? Which is the greater accomplishment: wisdom or material success? What kind of life is best to lead, an active life or a life of spiritual or intellectual contemplation? Are the two necessarily at odds, or can we achieve a balance between them?

At their heart, these questions concern the essence of a life well lived. They also represent two sides of an ongoing debate over the place of humanistic study and the study of literature itself: what is it for? Is it valuable because it develops the mind, or because it imparts practical skills? And what can it teach us about the decisions we make about how to conduct the other parts of our lives?

This Winter-Spring sequence explores an ongoing debate over the relative values of the “active life” versus the “contemplative life,” a debate that has its roots in classical and Biblical traditions but that takes on different forms and implications as it moves across changing literary, historical, and philosophical contexts. In the winter quarter, we will consider some of the questions that become foundational to the debate: are we defined by who we are or by what we do? How can we best put our knowledge to work? What are the characteristics of a truly wise person, and how can an individual cultivate wisdom through learning?

In the spring quarter, the course will consider the basic question of how you make up a self in the modern era, in a world whose values are driven so conspicuously by money and material things. Does a life of spiritual contemplation simply mean rejecting or condemning worldly goods? Or can it mean forging a life of intellectual intensity in a culture in which intellectuals are regularly mocked, derided, or occasionally feared? What sort of practical intelligence does capitalist modernity reward and why?
Course Goals

IHUM courses address and explore significant issues, themes, ideas, imaginative constructs, and values concerning human existence. Courses aim to develop the intellectual skills of inquiry, analysis, interpretation and synthesis necessary for successful university-level study. Students’ written work and discussion participation provide a means for evaluating progress in learning these critical skills.

- In winter, students expand their critical capacities by reading and analyzing texts at a faster pace through the lenses of chronology and disciplinary context.
- In spring, students consolidate their learning through synthesis of and reflection on the cumulative experiences of the year.

Required Texts
Po Bronson, *What Should I Do With My Life?*
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
Thomas More, *Utopia*
Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
Reader (including selections, also available online, from works by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, and Zajonc)

Assignments
Failure to complete any one assignment will result in a failing grade for the quarter. Students are expected to devote at least two hours of preparation out of class for each hour of class time, both for lectures and sections each week.

**Essay 1:** 3-4 pages (20%), due F, Feb 4 at 4:00 p.m. on Coursework and in hard copy to your Fellow.

**Essay 2:** 4-5 pages (25%), due M, Feb 28 at 10:00 a.m. in lecture and on Coursework.

**Final Exam:** (25%) Th, Mar. 17, 8:30-11:30 a.m. Location TBA

**Attendance and Participation:** (30%). Participation includes your attendance in both section and lecture and your thoughtful participation in section discussions. Lecture attendance is mandatory. In addition to the texts and essays specified here, you may be asked to complete additional written work and/or reading by the Fellow leading your discussion section.

No laptops in lecture without permission from Teaching Fellow.

SCHEDULE

**Week 1: The Active Life and the Contemplative Life: An Introduction**
- M Jan. 3: First meeting; introductory lecture
- W Jan. 5: in Reader or online,
  - Deresiewicz “The End of Solitude”
  - Po Bronson, *What Should I Do With My Life?* (p. ix-68)

**Week 2: The Active Life and the Contemplative Life: Classical Contexts**
- M Jan. 10: in Reader or online,
Plato, *Republic*, Book Seven
http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.8.vii.html

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book Seven, parts 1-3
http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.7.seven.html

W Jan. 12: in Reader or online,
Cicero, “De Officiis” (“Of Duties”), Book One, sections 1-19, 97-161
http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm#book1

**Week 3: Christian Transformations: from Theory to Contemplation**
M Jan. 17: HOLIDAY, no classes
W Jan. 19: in Reader or online,
Gospel of Luke, 10:38-42
St. Augustine, Sermon 53 and 54
http://www.ewtn.com/library/PATRISTIC/PNI6-10.TXT
St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Questions 179-182
http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3179.htm
http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3182.htm

**Week 4: Visit from Arthur Zajonc (Amherst College), Director of Center for Contemplative Mind**
M Jan 24: no lecture
T Jan 25: Lecture on Contemplation, the Sciences, and the Humanities, by Arthur Zajonc, Professor of Physics, Amherst College and Director, Center for Contemplative Mind
5pm, location TBA
W Jan 26: in Reader or online,
https://www.jcal.emory.edu/viewarticle.php?id=82&layout=html

**Week 5: Christian Transformations: from Theory to Contemplation**
M Jan. 31: Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*; read chapters 1-6 and 13 in the Short Text and chapters 1-12, 24-28, and 41-45 in the Long Text
W Feb. 2: Julian of Norwich (cont.); read chapters 51-63 and 67 in the Long Text
Essay 1 due F, February 4 at 4:00 p.m.

**Week 6: Active or Contemplative: Humanist Texts and Contexts**
M Feb. 7: Thomas More, *Utopia*, Book One
W Feb. 9: *Utopia* (cont.), Book Two

**Week 7: Active or Contemplative: Humanist Texts and Contexts**
W Feb. 16: *Courtier* (cont.); read Book Four, pages 242-257 and 264-306

**Week 8: Contemplation as Inaction**
M Feb. 21: HOLIDAY, no classes
W Feb. 23: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
Film screening: Th Feb. 24, 7:30 p.m. screening of *Hamlet* (Olivier), location TBA
Su Feb. 27, 7:00 p.m. rescreening of *Hamlet* (Olivier), location TBA
Week 9: Contemplation as Inaction
M Feb 28: Olivier’s Hamlet

Essay 2 due M, February 28 in lecture
Film screening: M Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m. screening of Hamlet (Zeffirelli), location TBA
T Mar. 1, 7:30 p.m. rescreening of Hamlet (Zeffirelli), location TBA

W Mar. 2: Zeffirelli’s Hamlet

Week 10: Final Week
M Mar. 7: Student debate
W Mar. 9: Student debate and Course wrap-up

Week 11: Final Exam
Th Mar. 17: 8:30-11:30 a.m. Location TBA

IHUM Absence Policy

Attendance at lectures and sections is mandatory. Students must alert fellows in advance if they will miss lecture. Attendance at lectures will be taken and unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation grade.

If a student has a prolonged illness, varsity athletic competitions, or a personal situation that might lead to more than two section absences, the student should contact his or her Post-doctoral Fellow before missing section. Under certain conditions (such as varsity athletic competitions or prolonged illness), a student may be provided an opportunity to make up the work missed in section. Note: insufficient section attendance will result in failure of the course.

Essays: IHUM courses foster rigorous inquiry and critical thinking and promote effective written argumentation.

A range: This paper is outstanding in form and content. The thesis is clear and insightful; it is original, or it expands in a new way on ideas presented in the course. The evidence presented in support of the argument is carefully chosen and deftly handled. The argument is not only unified and coherent, but also complex and nuanced.

B range: This paper's thesis is clear; the argument is coherent and presents evidence in support of its points. The argument shows comprehension of the material and manifests critical thinking about the issues raised in the course. The paper is reasonably well written and proofread. The argument, while coherent, does not have the complexity, the insight, or the integrated structure of an A range paper.

C range: This paper has some but not all of the basic components of an argumentative essay (i.e., thesis, evidence, coherent structure): for example, it may offer a thesis of some kind, but it presents no evidence to support this thesis; or it may present an incoherent thesis; or it may simply repeat points made in class without an overall argument. Such a paper is usually poorly organized, written and proofread.

D range or below A paper will fall below a "C" if it lacks more than one of the basic components of an argumentative essay.
**Section Participation:** IHUM courses are mandated to encourage vigorous intellectual exchange, the expression of various viewpoints, and the ability to speak effectively and cogently. Participation includes but is not limited to in-class discussion. As part of the participation grade, the Post-Doctoral Fellow may assign activities and written assignments such as individual or group presentations, on-line forum entries, reading responses, lecture summaries, debates, etc.

Participation will be evaluated on the following guidelines, which stress the quality rather than the quantity of contributions.

**A range:** The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts’ relation to issues raised in lecture and section. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

**B range:** The student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to section well-prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.

**C range:** The student meets the basic requirements of section participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student’s contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas but do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion. (Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade of "D" or below.)

**Provost’s Statement concerning Students with Disabilities**
Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education’s Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the DRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

**The Honor Code**
Violating the Honor Code is a serious offense, even when the violation is unintentional. The Honor Code is available at: [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm). You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them copying from another’s exam, unpermitted collaboration and representing as one’s own work the work of another. If you have any questions about these matters, see your teaching fellow during office hours.