

M Manhattan
School of Music

**HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT
HANDBOOK
2024–2025**

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 awaiting you, with its rigorous demands of disciplined study and artistic performance, promises to be especially rewarding. Achieving your professional and personal aspirations will depend, to a large degree, on the resources you cultivate over your course of study at MSM. To assist you in this endeavor, the courses in the Humanities invite you to participate in the diligent study of the dynamic connections between literature, philosophy, history, psychology, religion, languages and the arts. Our hope is that our integrated, interdisciplinary approach to the Humanities will enable you to emerge with a clearer understanding of the world around you and, perhaps more importantly, the world within you.

In an atmosphere charged by critical discussion based upon foundational works in the history of civilization, study in the Humanities offers you the opportunity to enhance the intellectual and imaginative skills crucial to your life as a musician as well as to your destiny as a creative individual. We hope your study of the Humanities at MSM will lead you to the kind of personal discovery and shared enrichment that is profoundly transformative, and from there to a life of communal contribution that you find especially rewarding.

A CHALLENGING PROSPECT

Although your professional focus might often tempt you to view the Humanities as secondary to your musical performance, we invite you to see how all 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 boundless

opportunities 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 and artists of the past is a process that, like all creative processes, possesses an element of mystery. One cannot precisely define how an understanding of Romanticism or an exploration of Hamlet's spiritual crisis will foster personal advancement. Indeed, it might take some time for the vision that is generated by these educational experiences, as one advances toward intellectual maturity, to crystallize in an enlightening and personally significant way. To have confidence in this process, greeting it with all of one's imaginative resources, is perhaps the most important challenge facing the MSM student in the Humanities Program.

CULTURAL INCLUSION

In accordance with the school-wide Cultural Inclusion Policy, the Humanities Department has established a pool of works from which individual professors may choose in order to enhance particular course syllabi. More specifically, the inclusion of works from underrepresented creators ensures that students will see their concerns reflected in course material, thereby promoting collective engagement with issues of contemporary social, political, and personal relevance.

The works of underrepresented creators are embedded in the Humanities curriculum in the following ways:

- Student-centered discussion
- Talking points / Oral presentations
- Informal written responses
- Essays
- Quizzes
- Midterm and Final Examinations

THE HUMANITIES CORE SEMINARS

As part of the Unified Core Curriculum, the Humanities Core, situated alongside Music History and Music Theory as foundational educational experiences for the conservatory student is an integral component of study at MSM. Study in the Humanities Core includes a four-semester sequence of Core Seminars—*Foundational Visions: Myth & Morality in the Ancient World*, *The Questing Self: Crisis & Resolution*, *Rebels & Revolutions: Paths to Utopia*, and *The Artist & Society: The Force of Imagination*.

The Core Seminars are the central component of the Humanities program. Organized thematically, the seminars survey seminal literary works and artistic achievements in our cultural tradition, 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 direct students to some of the most significant historical events, celebrity figures, and literary works that have shaped cultural history, in an effort to foster thoughtful, informed conversation and critical evaluation of the rich cultural legacy we have inherited from great civilizations of the past. 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 of preparing all of our students to find our success.

The Humanities Core Seminars are designed to initiate collective inquiry into the ideas that have shaped cultural expression throughout the ages. Focused on close reading and student-centered discussion of seminal texts ranging from ancient epic to contemporary fiction, the Core Seminars enable students to respond critically and creatively, in conversation and in writing, to representative literary works that showcase civilizations and cultures from antiquity to the present. The communal endeavor of these seminars will help students develop the skills of critical thinking, effective writing, persuasive argument, and creative

expression requisite to advance their careers, enhance their personal lives, and contribute to their communities. 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 critical to their success as artists, their development as individuals, and their participation in society. The Core Seminars commence with the study of masterworks from the ancient world in *Foundational Visions*, 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 world 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.

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 professors who are presenting their field of expertise in a highly charged seminar format that invites in-depth, student-centered consideration of a particular subject. For example, students may opt to study American History, Art History, Film, Poetry, Shakespeare, Languages, the cultural history of New York City, or the Harlem Renaissance, to name just a few of our current elective offerings.

For 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 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 AND THE HUMANITIES

The Humanities Department is attuned to the needs of International Students conducting their studies in Humanities at MSM, where English is the primary language of instruction. All Humanities professors seek to empower students in their pursuit of gaining confidence and fluency in their use of the English language. To this end, conversation remains an invaluable and time-honored mode of instruction.

In addition, MSM offers a two-semester bridge course entitled *Fundamentals of Writing*, designed to enhance reading and writing skills and to thereby prepare students for more intensive study in the Humanities Core.

At any point in your studies, should you experience difficulty in your readings or participating in classroom discussion, please inform your professor so that he or she might offer ways to support your classroom engagement. Additionally, if you would like support with the writing or rewriting of an essay, we invite you to arrange a conference with your professor.

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 Office of the Registrar and the Dean of Academic Affairs 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 professor and secure the approval

of the Department Chair, the Registrar, and the Dean of Academic Affairs. Students are allowed one such independent study project per degree.

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 Registrar and the Chair of the Humanities Department. Please bring a transcript, along with a course description, for each course you are hoping to transfer, to facilitate the evaluation of your coursework at other institutions. Please also refer to the Transfer Credit Policy available in the Academic Catalog.

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 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 professor, and discredits your reputation in the School community. In some cases, plagiarism 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 culminate—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 professors are available to assist you in your pursuits every step of the way. Trust

your relationship with your professor, resist the impulse to cheat and misrepresent yourself, and your progress will be assured. If you are at all unclear about Plagiarism, speak with your professor 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 227. Please feel free to stop by whenever you wish to discuss any aspect 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. Delano R. Copprue, by voicemail at x4459 or by email at dcopprue@msmny.edu. The best way to contact him is via email, in order to initiate discussion of an issue or arrange an appointment. His specific office hours will be posted each semester, but he is typically in his office, Room 227, most mornings before the start of classes.

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-actualization and communal contribution!

Dr. Delano R. Copprue, Chair
MSM Humanities Department

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

John Keats (1795-1821)

