

Human Sciences 101 and E-Portfolios at St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Tracy Penny Light
Lorna Rourke
Jessica Brunton



We're here to talk about...

- ▶ St. Jerome's University—where and what is it, and who are we?
- ▶ Human Sciences 101—what is it?
- ▶ How is social justice work incorporated into Human Sciences 101?
- ▶ How are e-portfolios integrated into HumSci101, and how do they reflect our students' becoming 'citizens of the world'?
- ▶ Implementing the course—a template
- ▶ Future plans

Where we're from

- ▶ St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: A public Roman Catholic Liberal Arts university, federated with the University of Waterloo, established in 1865
- ▶ www.sju.ca



Who We Are

- ▶ Tracy Penny Light, PhD: Professor of History and SMF (Sexuality, Marriage & Family)
- ▶ Lorna Rourke, MA, MLS: Library Director
- ▶ Jessica Brunton: 1st year undergraduate student

Human Sciences 101: Reflection & Action

- ▶ 1st year transition program
- ▶ Very small class sizes
- ▶ Integrative learning
 - Academic context
 - Social and cultural context
- ▶ Students as “scholars of learning”
- ▶ Responsible & engaged citizens
- ▶ Academic integrity
- ▶ Linking course with social learning experiences

Student comment

- ▶ “A very important aspect that lent to the success of the program was the class size. We had only eleven students in the class. This small number meant that not only were we able to create a strong student–teacher connection, but we also had the opportunity to communicate with our classmates, which was very helpful, as entering university is, in some respects, quite anxiety provoking, and it was nice to have a class where everyone knew each other by name, which extended beyond the classroom walls for a number of us”.

Course description

- ▶ “What is the relationship between thinking and action? Do they pull us in different directions? Can they be integrated? This course investigates how our own dialogue with core texts, from antiquity (e.g., Homer) to the present (e.g., Arendt), offers ways of understanding the dilemmas and issues raised by these texts and present in our culture. In particular, this course will explore how reflection and action pertain to the notion of responsible citizenship and are useful for students beginning university study.”

Learning Outcomes for Human Sciences 101: Students will...

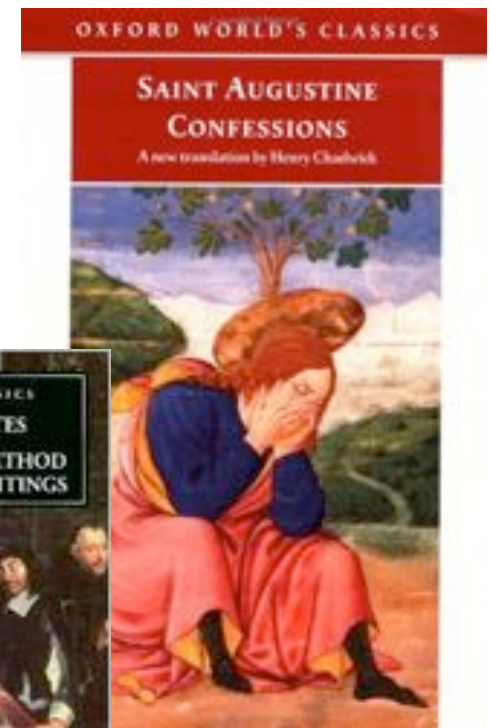
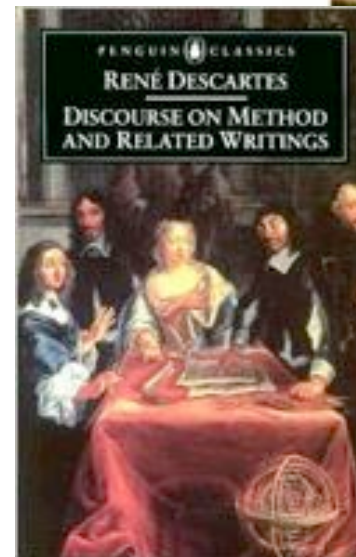
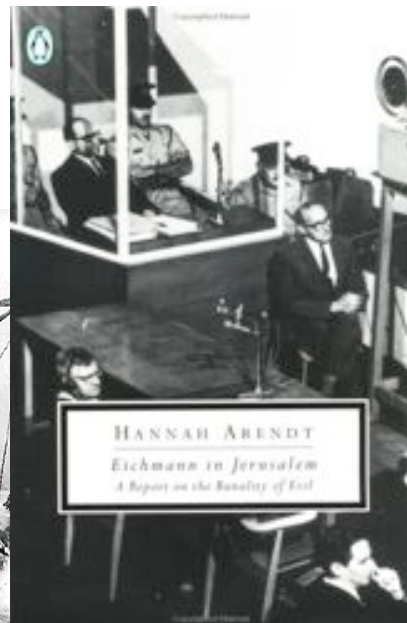
1. Recognize the ethical implications of reflection and action in both the course texts and in the context of your own exploration of what it means to be a responsible citizen;
2. Engage with the issues raised by the core texts in the course through reflection, writing, and discussion;
3. Develop an understanding of the nature of argument through an appreciation of the argument of a text;

Learning outcomes...continued

4. Develop a sustained response to an author's argument both orally and in writing (i.e., have a position defended with evidence) that comes from the core texts we are studying as well as from outside sources;
5. Develop an appreciation for “the other” or alternative perspectives embedded in different core texts and in your exploration of what it means to be a responsible citizen;
6. Work with others to generate ideas about the themes presented in the course.

Texts were supplied to the students
free of charge

- ▶ Homer, *The Odyssey*
- ▶ Augustine, *The Confessions*
- ▶ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
- ▶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*



Student comment

- ▶ “The Human Science class focused on four main texts. While reading each of these texts we were asked to relate them back to the main themes of the course, which were reflection and action. It was both interesting and beneficial to discover how one theme extended through four different books and four different periods in time.”

Three different professors / Three different approaches

Dr. Penny Light's section of the course:

- ▶ Focused on work outside the core texts
- ▶ Included "field trips"
- ▶ Included E-Portfolios
- ▶ Included student presentations based on their E-Portfolios
- ▶ Included in-class research assignment
- ▶ Focused on writing, critical thinking, reflection, action, and responsible citizenship

Student Comment

- ▶ *“The lectures were very discussion oriented, and we were able to learn not only from the professor but from each other as well. This style of lecture also meant that we were privy to a variety of opinions, which helped us establish a well-constructed opinion by the conclusion of the lecture because we had the opportunity to have our own thoughts challenged and elaborated upon.”*

Comment from a student in another section of the course

- ▶ *“ My professor took an approach that was very religiously influenced. I thought that it was interesting to examine how the minds of humans, and their belief systems, have changed throughout time. From Greek philosophy to Christian ethics, human science really explored the dynamics of the changes.”*

Guest speakers added to the students' experience of the course

- ▶ Dr. Scott Kline, Religious Studies Professor & Director of the “Beyond Borders” Program, spoke about “Heroes and Responsible Citizenship”
- ▶ Dr. Steven Bednarski, History Professor and Medieval Studies Program Director, on Augustine in historical context
- ▶ Lorna Rourke, Librarian, worked with the students on an in-class research exercise and discussed academic integrity and information literacy

Student comment

- ▶ “Another important aspect that distinguished the Human Science class from others was the number of guest lecturers that presented. I believe that by meeting such a variety of different professors we were able to understand the subject matter from a variety of different perspectives. At least in my case, this exposure encouraged me to experiment with class selections that I may not have made previous to the Human Science class. Once again, the guest lecturers also meant that we were introduced to a few more familiar faces around campus, which was comforting.”

“Responsible Citizenship” and Human Sciences 101

- ▶ Students in the course were expected to demonstrate their commitment to being responsible citizens
- ▶ They each worked as volunteers in a variety of organizations and programs
- ▶ At the last class meeting, each student reported on their experiences as volunteers
- ▶ A “Social Justice Club” is being formed at St. Jerome’s University, spearheaded by students in Tracy’s class

Student comment

- ▶ *“Much of the focus of the class was surrounding responsible citizenship. One of the major requirements for the Human Science class was a responsible citizenship assignment, where we were asked to first perform an action of responsible citizenship, and then reflect upon it in a creative way. Many people did so through PowerPoint presentations, others created posters, I personally constructed a brochure. These were submitted with a written report about our action of citizenship. This assignment was assigned to encourage us to get involved, not only in our school community, but in society as well. It was a step towards becoming functional members of a community, and was also an opportunity for us to give back and discover other facets of our personality through service to others.”*

E-Portfolios and Human Sciences 101

The E-Portfolio Assignment:

1. Throughout the term you will participate in activities that develop your ability to think critically about the course themes of reflection and action, particularly in terms of responsible. You will document your learning in your ePortfolio. The creation of a portfolio is, in essence, a reflective activity. You will collect materials throughout the term to go into your ePortfolio and, by the end of the term, select those documents that you feel best showcase your learning.

The E-Portfolio Assignment...continued

2. Your ePortfolio is about your learning, so you can choose what to include in the final version that you will submit to me. You may want to include your own reflections on the term (i.e. thoughts on the various topics), your analytic papers, and/or your responsible citizenship assignment. You may also choose to include documents from other learning contexts (i.e. other courses, workplace, community) to indicate how what you have learned in HUMSC 101 can be transferred or used after the course is over.

Student E-Portfolios

- ▶ E-Portfolios were made using the “KEEP Toolkit”—open source software from the Carnegie Foundation
- ▶ See eport.uwaterloo.ca

- ▶ And here are some examples of our HUMSC 101 students’ E-Portfolios...

Student Comment

- ▶ *“The E–portfolio was a great culminating activity for a class such as Human Science. We learned a new skill with the e–portfolio and it differed from the rest of our courses. The e–portfolio forced us to evaluate ourselves and our experience in the class, which kept with the theme of reflection and action.”*

Jessica Brunton's HUMAN SCIENCE E-portfolio:

HOW GREAT DIALOGUES, REFLECTION AND ACTION CHANGED MY VIEW OF THE WORLD

Introduction to E-portfolio

I created this E-portfolio for HUMSC 101 to demonstrate the various focuses of the course, my own opinions on the themes of reflection, action and responsible citizenship as well as the information I obtained from the four course texts. It is my hope that people viewing my e-portfolio will receive a better understanding of what the human science course offers. I also hope that individuals will have a heightened awareness about the numerous opportunities for people to become responsible citizens, regardless of age, or capability.

What I learned From Human Science:

The humorous thing about the human science course is that no matter what I learned, I could neither be disappointed or surprised because I had no preconceptions or expectations when entering the class. The reason for this was that I really did not know what human science was, and I had enrolled in the class with the encouragement from my guidance counselor. This being said, I learned a great deal from the class, not the usual knowledge that you expect to learn in university, which generally comes from countless hours of reading textbooks, or lengthy texts and essays, but knowledge that made me a better person, and changed the way I viewed the world. In essence, the Human Science course opened my eyes to the world around me and the countless number of opportunities that I personally could be involved in to make the world a bit better place. The Human Science course, and Dr. Tracy Penny Light, my professor, did this in a variety of ways. I was able to learn to understand the world better through writings from hundreds of years ago. I was told by Homer that heroes do not always come in tights and capes, but in simple human packages, and that I did not have to save entire cities, or nations to be a hero. Instead, I could be a hero through simple acts of kindness and citizenship. Augustine demonstrated to me that all the reflection in the world meant absolutely nothing when it was not accompanied by action. Rene Descartes explained that in order for me to be responsible, I had to be a global learner. That making decisions with a reliance on instinct might make me "fall", and I must therefore make decisions through the accumulation of knowledge about all of the various aspects of the topic. And finally, Hannah Arendt made me question my opinions about war criminals, such as Eichmann, in World War II. I was forced to question the banality of evil, and in doing so, I saw a horrible situation from two sides of a story. Instead of just one. She made me step outside myself and transform into a Nazi soldier and a Jewish prisoner in order to become a little bit closer to the situation that so many people were hugely damaged from and that some people very close to me, my grandfathers who fought in WWII, were witness to. I was also able to hear the man who sat at the counter in Dresden tell a truly touching story, one that I may never have had the privilege of hearing if I had not enrolled in the class. So, I may have had little expectation entering Human Science, but I leave with a much greater expectation for myself. I no longer view the world without a sense of responsibility, and I understand that I may never change the world in a global sense, but every action that I do make, even as simple as voting, or using reusable water bottles, plays a small, but significant role, in an attempt to make a better tomorrow.



To think is easy. To act is difficult. To act as one thinks is the most difficult.

-Johann Wolfgang Von Goeth

What exactly is "Action"?

Action is something being done, generally in a physical state. "Taking Action" was discussed frequently in Human Science, a term that we used in a positive light, as making a difference, and putting positive reflection into play.



What is Reflection?

Reflection can be defined in many ways, each unique to every individual, however, in essence reflection is a form of contemplation, for some it is a lengthy process, for others it is non-existent. It is the process of consideration, and it is in the absence of reflection that many foolish mistakes are made.





Responsible Citizenship

I do not believe there is one clear cut approach to responsible citizenship, and every individual's definition of what a responsible citizen is varies. To me, being a responsible citizen is extending myself beyond my daily activities in an attempt to better the world as a whole, both on a large and small scale. It is the act of extending oneself to others, "extending a helping hand," in hopes that that action will make a difference. By helping others, we too are rewarded with a sense of pride and compassion.

Youtube: [Responsible Citizenship Video](#)

This slideshows was created for a presentation given to college freshmen encouraging them to be responsible citizens.



My Work as a Responsible Citizen:

- One to One and family support worker, Carpe Diem Residential Therapeutic Treatment Homes for Foster Children
- Assistant director, Sydenham Youth Drama Club
- Organized and ran children's birthday parties, Millside Riding Stable
- Group Leader, Basketball vs. Bullying by McMaster and Mohawk
- Volunteer, Special Olympics Baseball Tournament, Mindemoya Ontario
- Run for Light, Run for the Cure
- Performed at Nursing Homes around Brant county
- Server, Brantford Soup Kitchen
- Social Justice Club, St. John's College
- Christmas gift drive, St. John's College
- Swim instructor, Brantford Aquatic Club
- Lifeguard
- Voting

Raising Awareness: Child Welfare

A brochure I made to raise awareness about the issues concerning child welfare in Canada

China's One-Child Policy Slideshow

Slideshow I made last year about the issues in China regarding the One-Child Policy

Child Abuse Slideshow

Slideshow I made last year about the issue of child abuse in Canada

St. Jerome's University~Human
Sciences 101 & E-portfolios

Jessica
Brunton

E-Portfolio- HUMSC 101

Jessica Brunton

November 18, 2008

Dr. Tracy Penny-Light

*The Images used are from Photos.com



Reflection and Action in Human Science:

Reflection and action were two themes that appeared frequently throughout the course. In fact, reflection and action were discussed in almost every single class. Throughout the term we focused on four major texts, which brought about the "Great Dialogues" portion of the class. These included:

- The Odyssey, By Homer
- Confessions, By St. Augustine
- Discourse on Method, By Rene Descartes, and;
- Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, by Hannah Arendt

All of these texts lent to the themes of reflection and action. I chose to focus specifically on The Odyssey for my first Analytic paper, where I talked about reflection and action within the novel, and I related each situation in accordance with the theme to popular culture, including the movie, Hairpray, the novel and movie, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone and finally, the movie, She's the Man. The Theme of reflection and action in correspondence with the major texts was also the focus of many of my weekly reflection.

Analysis Paper

A look at the theme of reflection and action according to Homer's, The Odyssey and popular culture

Week 11'sa Reflection

Week 11'sa Reflection: My opinion about Eichmann in Jerusalem, by Hannah Arendt

Week 10'sa Reflection

A closer look into the theme of reflection and action in Discourse on Method and related writings

Week 9'sa Reflection

My opinion about Confessions, by St. Augustine



Sib Visit, Carpe Diem Residential Therapeutic Treatment Homes for Foster Children

St. Jerome's University~Human
Sciences 101 & E-portfolios

More eportfolio samples



Responsibility, What's That?

By Spencer Goudy

Responsible Citizenship

In order to be a responsible citizen, some kind of action must be taken. The action should be properly thought out or else the outcome will be unknown and could be seen as an irresponsible move. The reflection and action must be something deemed socially appropriate or else most people will just see you as crazy.



Weekly Reflections

Week 1

This is what I thought of the first week

Week 2

This one is all about the second week

Week 3

Another week, another story

Week 4

What I thought about the short week number 4

Week 5

Guess what this one is all about

Week 6

Week 6 reply

Week 7

Reflection and Action Does Not Always Equal Responsible Citizenship

Criminals. Most crimes are said to occur in the heat of the moment or in other words "a crime of passion," which means there was no thought just an action which is considered inappropriate. If the crime is thought out first and then enacted it is a much more serious crime. Based on what a reasonable person would think and do

Perfection, Gotta Love it!

This is what happens when you act in a proper way that is seen as very noble by society. Any one can be a responsible citizen. If you cannot devote a sizable chunk of your time to say working with kids or coaching you can do small things that do make a difference

Thinking is an Essential Part of Reflection

Descartes used a very effective method to solve problems. First, do not believe everything you hear as true to avoid prejudice and jumping to conclusions. Second, break it down into separate parts. Third, break it into steps and solve the easiest first then move to the more difficult, basically giving order to something that appears to have no possible order. Fourth, make sure you cover everything to ensure you do not miss anything. Now, you do not need to use this for every thought or problem you have but it is the way we were brought up so it tends to be the accepted way of thinking

What is Responsible?

Responsibility is exactly what society makes it. It is all about the majority's beliefs that will determine right and wrong.

Stand for what is Right

A good way to be a responsible citizen is to stand up for what you believe is right. Chances are if you believe something is being done wrong, or simply is not being done at all, that there are more people that feel the same way. Make your voice heard and say something. A good example of this is Edlmann vs. Oskar Schindler

Oskar Schindler

Here is a link to a movie about Oskar if you wish to know more about him

What Have we Actually Done This Year?

We have read a total of four novels as well as written one analytic paper this far in the course. The books provided us with completely different ways of thinking about different aspects of life during a range of different time periods.

The books we have read are:

The Confessions by Saint Augustine

The Odyssey by Homer

Discourse on Method and Related Writings by Rene Descartes

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil by Hannah Arendt

Responsible Citizenship and The St. Jerome's Student

By Faith Cameletti



image from www.sju.ca

The Role of the St. Jerome's Student

- Take certain courses and attend class
- Do assigned readings, homework, assignments and studying
- Maintain marks and overall average
- Graduate
- Enter workforce and become a valued contributor of society

Other Roles that the St. Jerome's Student
may play

- Friend
- Child
- Grandchild
- Sibling
- Employee
- Volunteer
- Person of Faith
- Athlete
- Artist
- Canadian Citizen

All of these roles are accompanied by their own set of duties and responsibilities. When a person combines all their roles, it describes what kind of individual they are. Our roles as individuals are what guide us to be Responsible Citizens in any context/role. Because when we are Responsible Citizens and Individuals we are given the responsibilities of reflection and action.

Introduction

Welcome to my E-portfolio on Responsible Citizenship!

As a first-year student at St. Jerome's University, I decided to focus my E-portfolio on Responsible Citizenship in the life of the average St. Jerome's student.

Also to help you Navigate easily through this e-portfolio there are three sections.

Section 1 (In Orange)- "The Average St. Jerome's Student"

Section 2 (In Blue)- "Reflection and Action"

Section 3 (In Cream/Yellow)- "Examples of Responsible Citizenship"

The Role of the Individual

Responsibilities of Reflection and Action

Reflection

1. Become aware of social, political and cultural issues in the world around us.

Awareness is important because it helps us to

- Appreciate how fortunate we are in comparison to others around the world. As St. Jerome's students here in Canada we are fortunate enough to have freedoms and rights that so many around the world do not. We have the right to education, free health care and the freedoms of free speech, and religion. Also most students (especially those in residence) are blessed with clean drinking water, shelter, safety, food and family. Knowing how fortunate we are, encourages us to use our opportunities to our full advantage.
- Be empowered to help those who are not as fortunate.

2. Consider how acting or not acting will affect others around you, the environment, society and yourself.

3. Decide What the best course of action is.

Individual Perspective and Reflection

The importance of being an individual is that individuality is what affects our thought process. The combination of roles we play, in collaboration with what we gain from life experiences creates a lens to which we view the world. With this lens, we don't see things as they are, we instead see things as we are.

Being aware that our "lens" and thought process is affected by different external experiences is important to help prevent negative ideas, opinions and images from affecting our thoughts, emotions and actions. When Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent", it reflected the notion that with self-confidence and self-regulated reflection we are enabled to control our own lens. This self-regulation of our lens, is exactly what is needed for Responsible Citizens. If your voice, opinion and choice of action is sacrificed to overwhelming external forces, you are allowing yourself to be objectified and incapable of becoming a positive force and influence within humanity.



Responsible Citizenship: In and Beyond the Walls of the Classroom

By: Katie Zaparanuk

Introduction to ePortfolio

Dr. Tracy Penny-Light's class HUMSC 101: Reflection and Action looks at the concepts of reflection and action and the whole notion of responsible citizenship in relation to four core texts; Homer's *The Odyssey*, *The Confessions* by Saint Augustine, Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt. HUMSC 101 acts as a transition class from high school to university by offering a small class size, class participation, and in depth feedback on assignments and tasks completed but it does much more than that. It acts as a model for leading a life of critical thinking because it focuses on the reading and discussion of the texts but also how to apply these ideas beyond the classroom. It is through reading these works and having discussions that I have developed a clear understanding of what reflection and action are and how combined they can make someone a responsible citizen.



What is Responsible Citizenship to Me?

At the culmination of HUMSC 101 I have come to view the following characteristics and actions to contribute to the development of a responsible citizen. People who embody these things and act accordingly are those who are changing our world for the better.

- It is the marriage of reflection and action. The process of reflecting before acting hence action resulting from reflection.
- Reflection and action in everyday life joined with strong morality and ethics (what is right and wrong) makes someone a responsible citizen.
- A person who does what they can for the good of human kind with what skills, talents, and abilities they possess at a particular moment in time displays responsible citizenship.
- It is not static. How someone contributes to society as a responsible citizen changes over time and is dependent on age, job, social class, gender, etc.
- A responsible citizen stands for something; they are an agent of change. The opposite of this is an irresponsible citizen. This is a person who objectifies themselves by saying "I have nothing to say, I can't help." [This shows reflection without (not followed by) action.]
- It looks at people on the outside edges of society i.e. poverty, racism, etc. and responds (helps) these people.
- A responsible citizen takes responsibility for their actions, or lack of.

Being a Responsible Citizen

"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

– Margaret Mead

What is Action to Me?

After reading and studying the four core texts I have drawn the following conclusions about action.

- Positive action results from reflection.
- Action without reflection generally ends up badly.
- It is the process of "carrying out" something; it can be either good or bad.
- It is often done out of a want or a need.
- Action always has a purpose whether you are consciously or subconsciously thinking about it.
- A person's actions speak louder than words; they are a physical display and expression of one's attitudes, beliefs, feelings, opinions, etc.

[Click Here to go to CTV.ca](#)

There is always action, both good and bad, going on in the news. After all it is action that makes for a good story. If people did not do anything there would be no stories at all! Click on the link above to check out the latest action.

Ways to be Active

People think that they are already active in their lives with their jobs, school, family, etc. and this is true. However, there are many other opportunities to become active and involved that not everyone takes advantage of. Below is a list of a few activities which you or your family members may want to try.

- Join a club
- Volunteer
- Take up a sport



Relay for Life and Me

Like I said earlier the lessons taught in HUMSC 101 extend far beyond the walls of the classroom and into the real world. Before even knowing that this class existed I was already applying the notion of being a responsible citizen to my life. My involvement with North Durham Relay for Life 2008 not only, I hope, helped to come one step closer to finding a cure for cancer but bettered me as a person and forever changed my life.

[Click here to Read my Relay for Life](#)

Beyond the Walls of the Classroom

HUMSC 101 has truly affected me as more than just a student but rather a person. The lessons taught in the class extend far beyond those of just an educational value; they embody what it means to be a good person. Although its purpose is to assist in the transition of a student from high school to university I believe that it goes beyond this and shapes students into the responsible citizens of today and tomorrow.

- Through class discussions on reflection, action, and responsible citizenship I have developed a better understanding of these three than I would have had I simply just read the books. This shows what can of learner I am. I learn better verbally as opposed to visually.
- Through hearing other people's opinions it helped me to better understand my own. Furthermore I was able to see how my own life experiences have shaped my perspectives and others theirs.
- As a perspective Speech Communication Major I am able to relate the three key topic areas of HUMSC 101 into what I am currently learning about good interpersonal communication. In fact I put sticky notes in my SPCCOM book relating the two courses together.
- I have further developed my critical thinking through reading and discussing the texts. I am able to think beyond the words that I read and see what is "hidden" (the deeper meaning/message).
- My eyes have been opened to view things in a broader context. I realize that it is important to take things and put them into context. Whether it is a cultural context, an era context, a gender context, etc. By putting things and people into context you are better able to understand them.
- You really can make a difference. This course empowers you to believe that even the smallest things you do i.e. stand up for someone who is being bullied make you into a responsible citizen. With responsible citizenship comes great power and with this power we can shape our future.

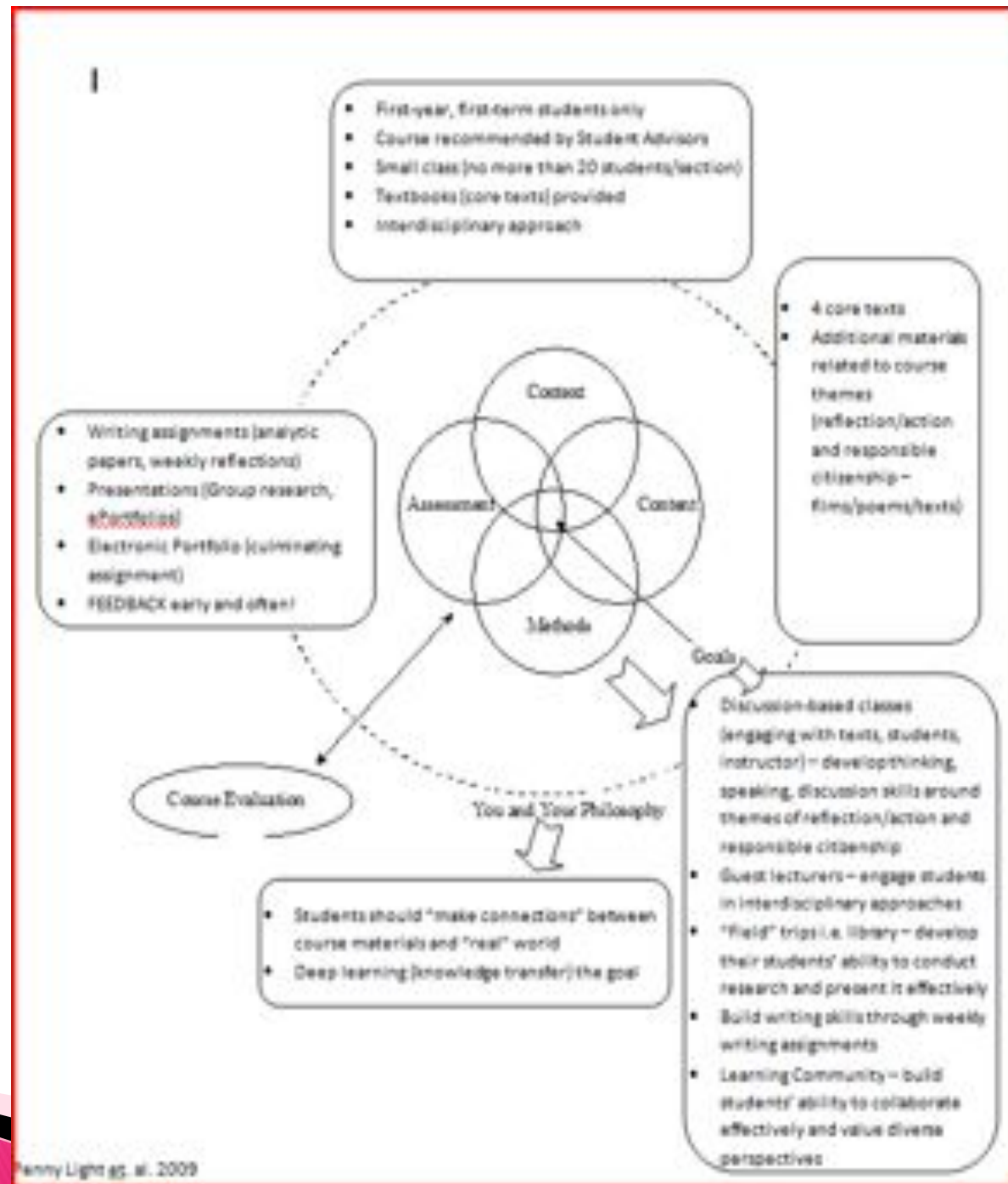
Student Comment

- ▶ *“The human science course gave us the benefit of an intimate class size which enabled us to have in depth discussions. The books and materials studied were diverse, but were all classic works. I feel that I benefitted from reading the various works, like The Odyssey and Plato's symposium. The books were provided, which meant that we had a number of some of the greatest classical books, and we did not need to spend hundreds of dollars on them.”*

Future plans/Following up

- ▶ Faculty discussions
- ▶ Focus groups with students in each section
- ▶ Future integrated information literacy component: research assignment and skills as part of the E-Portfolio
- ▶ Consideration being given to the course becoming compulsory for all 1st year SJU students in Fall 2009

Our Concept Map



A student has the final word...

- ▶ *“Human science was a very interesting class. I believe that it fulfilled the goal of the teachers, which was to help high school students to transition into the university atmosphere. The course did this in many ways; most importantly I feel was that the course challenged our way of thinking. It was a great way to demonstrate how someone should go about university life.”*

To contact us...

- ▶ tplight@uwaterloo.ca
- ▶ lerourke@uwaterloo.ca
- ▶ jabrunto@uwaterloo.ca

Thank you!