
COURSE TASKS

GENERAL REQUIREMENT: Participation in *most of the lectures/discussions*.

TASK 1 (individually): *general learning journal*

- The student writes a *general learning journal* based on the lectures/discussions; the journal *reflects the student's own insights, observations, critical thoughts, interesting new ideas* etc., received during the session (it is important to write these down during the sessions and refer to them in the journal).
- The learning journal has no particular or fixed format: it consists of the student's understanding and thoughts and interpretations about the course; two criteria, however, are essential: the journal should show (1) that *the substance of the course has been understood*, and (2) that *the substance has been processed and critically reflected upon* — both are equally important; if something about the contents of the sessions remained unclear, *it is important to contact the course coordinator* who will, gladly, explain the matters in more detail.
- In the end of the learning journal there should be a *feedback section* in which *the student expresses his/her sentiments about the whole course*: What, in the end, was the personal 'gain' from the course? What kind of a learning experience was the course? etc.

TASK 2 (as pair or group work): *analytical essay*

- Students write (in pairs or groups) an *analytic essay* on one or a couple of the themes discussed during the course; the essay *elaborates on the profundities and practical consequences of the chosen theme*, based on both the sessions and the course literature/materials (it is important to actually study these materials and refer to them in the essay).
- The essay has a structure, but not fixed format: it consists of simple and clear sections separated by descriptive titles chosen by students; here too, the two criteria are essential: the essay should show (1) that *the substance of the course has been understood*, and (2) that *the substance has been processed and critically reflected upon* — both are equally important; although the books and course materials provided to facilitate critical and speculative thought, *it is important that they are studied and referred to* in the contents of the essay.
- The overall length of the essay could be about 12-16 pages (or 6'000-8'000 words); however, *the primary concern is on the substance, not the length, of the essay* (a shorter essay with profound substance is preferable to a long essay with superficial substance but, of course, a short essay is not automatically better than a lengthy one).
- Students should *use the questions/themes below to provoke contemplation and induce reflection*; they are not, however, meant to be used *as such*, but only as points of departure or 'food for thought' *to help students find their particular theme(s) of interest*.
 - » Question/theme 1: What are the possibilities of *global ethos*; in a world of diverse cultures, religions and values, is not the idea of some universal ethics a mere fancy and delusion; how, in earlier times, was it then possible for diverse and even conflicting tribes and clans to become united as modern-time nations, most of which maintain a shared internal identity and coherent set of values?
 - » Question/theme 2: What is the dilemma produced by *pluralism*, as an articulated value, and *multiculturalism*, as a reality of modern life; how can the effects of one-eyed pluralism combined with aggressive individualism/materialism be mitigated; what other values are needed to bring balance?
 - » Question/theme 3: Reflect on the difference of concept of religion as an '*original*' *spiritual education* vs. religion as an *expression of human failure*: What is the difference between *the initial reviving and renewing impulse of all world religions* and between *the subsequent dogmatic fanaticism and often politicized agenda religious communities*?
 - » Question/theme 4: How can citizens of this planet *overcome their petty differences* that are caused by fanatical, blind and exclusive faith and by biased religious objectives; how can humankind *find a united spiritual foundation* that is based on the evolutionary wisdom, the coherent education and the collective global heritage offered by world religions?