

ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 Topics in Humanomics: Into the Unknown: Self-Formation and Entrepreneurship

Syllabus

Instructors:

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Class:

T/R Wilkinson Hall 220



Course Description

Success in commerce is about taking risks, cooperating with others, and pivoting when necessary. Entrepreneurs are adventurers who require the same skills found in artists and philosophers. They must be willing to think outside the box. Both art and commerce require imagination, courage, and adaptation. They both reward *comfort with the unknown*—not only a willingness to negotiate it when it presents itself, but a willingness to seek it out, and even to create it. What can we do to even more consciously nurture the traits in ourselves that make us into successful members of our dynamic, social and commercial world?

Using Socratic dialogue, this course engages students in dialogically exploring economics, philosophy, and literature texts to examine two questions at the core of Humanomics: What makes a rich nation rich? What makes a good person good? This course encourages in-depth study of the co-constitutive social texts regarding the exponential economic growth of the last two-hundred years, asking students to consider how knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics shape and reshape basic principles of exchange and the human condition.

“The word enterprise points to a venture into the unknown. Businessmen are explorers, sometimes suffering shipwreck by their over-bold conceptions, sometimes hitting on a path leading to revolutionary success. Business is not to be thought of as lying at a lower level of human concerns than the writing of fiction or the seeking of power through political pretensions. Business is creative and its study is as worthy of human effort as that of history, law, medicine, social organization and art.”

George Shackle, *Epistemics and Economics* p. xii

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate familiarity with artistic, philosophical, and scientific perspectives on the concept of the unknown.
2. Identify, utilize, and critically engage with ideas about the unknown in the fields of economics, philosophy, literature, cinema, and theatre.
3. Reflect upon the moral complexities implied by the fact of uncertainty, and upon the ways different approaches to the unknown comport with their own values.

Program Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to critically analyze and communicate complex issues and ideas in a variety of genres and modes.

General Education Learning Outcomes

As the term “humanomics” suggests, the Smith Institute’s “Topics in Humanomics” course, ENG/ECON/PHIL 357, seeks to dissolve the boundaries that currently separate the disciplines of economics, literary studies (and art in general), and philosophy. Because the objects of study in these disciplines are rapidly converging due to the recognition that the human condition must be studied *in toto* rather than piecemeal, they can no longer be studied in isolation. While neoclassical economists constituted *homo economicus* as a kind of human calculator who constantly assesses risks and opportunities in the context of self-interest, postmodern economists acknowledge that it’s far more complicated than that, and to understand economic behavior, we need to draw upon perspectives from other disciplines that examine not just how humans make choices but why. Literature and philosophy have just as much to teach economists as does economic science and vice versa, economics when understood as a study of motivation and “origins” rather than mere means, ends, and outcomes, has a great deal to teach other disciplines that are equally concerned with how humans find or even make meaning in their lives. In every version of 357, students read literary, economic, and philosophical texts to understand how each mode both represents the world through its own conventions and raises the kinds of questions that cannot be confined to any given academic silo.

Given this aspiration, this course fulfills the following inquiries required by Chapman’s undergraduate curriculum:

1. **VI/Values and Ethics Inquiry.** Provides students an opportunity to explore values and ethical perspectives in humanistic, aesthetic, religious, and/or philosophical contexts. (The GE code is VI, 3 credits.)

Rationale: Students will consider the ethical problems that arise in a world of uncertainty. They will explore the values that drive economic analysis, creative literature, and philosophical inquiry on the unknown. By meditating on these, students will prepare their values for their own inevitable encounters with the unknown.

2. **SI/Social Inquiry.** Provides students an opportunity to explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives. (The GE code is SI, 3 credits.)

Rationale: Students will become familiar with the ways economists, philosophers, and writers have characterized our society’s relationship to the unknown. Students will consider how different approaches to meeting uncertainty have led societies in different directions, and how their own encounters with the unknown can have extended social impacts.

3. **AI/Artistic Inquiry:** Provides students an opportunity to explore artistic media, performance and/or creative expression. (The GE code is AI, 3 credits.)

Rationale: This class seeks to confound the distinction that currently separates entrepreneurial activity from the arts. Some deride businesspeople as crass-money grubbers while valorizing artists as countercultural priests. Others cast businesspeople as heroic innovators while looking down on artists as self-indulgent bums. But as we will explore, the mentalities that drive entrepreneurs are parallel to those that drive artists. We will invite students to think about the commonalities between art and business—they both involve dreaming, imagination, strategy, courage, daring, risk-taking, seeking to engage or please others, etc. Students will be asked to think about the ways in which art engages themes related to the unknown in ways that have and/or still could influence economists and anyone else who wishes to build and sustain a culture of dynamism and innovation. Students will be asked to consider how artistic engagement with the unknown can influence economists, and how economic analysis of uncertainty can influence artists. Art is often *about* an encounter with the unknown, but it is also, itself, an encounter with the unknown in that it asks us to learn how to make meaning out of a wide variety of modes and genres. Finally, students will have the opportunity to produce a creative piece that communicates something they find important about the theme of the unknown. This activity will allow them—not only find ways to represent something about the unknown— but to encounter it, by creating something new in a new and unfamiliar way.

Required Texts

- 1) Jose Saramago, *The Tale of the Unknown Island*. Mariner Books; First Edition (2000). Purchase: <https://a.co/d/h5cQ0Do>
- 2) Frank Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*. Dover (2006 [1921]) Purchase: <https://store.doverpublications.com/products/9780486447759>
- 3) Plato, *Meno*. (access on Canvas, print out for class)
- 4) Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, a Broadway musical. Professional video recording available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuCvRicJISU>
- 5) H.P. Lovecraft, “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” (access on Canvas, print out for class)
- 6) Lewis Carrol, *Alice in Wonderland*. Purchase: <https://a.co/d/f92oKwD>
- 7) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (access on Canvas, print out for class)
- 8) Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (2020). Purchase: <https://a.co/d/05pnnfu>
- 9) Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self* (access on Canvas).
- 10) Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. Grove Press; 1st edition (2011). Purchase: <https://a.co/d/cv8GuYB>

11) Roger Williams, *Key into the Language of America*. Lulu.com (2018). Purchase:
<https://a.co/d/04sUZdB>

Required purchases: 6

Sum expense: \$88

Evaluation and Grading

Your final grade will be assigned according to your performance in the course as based upon the following criteria:

1) Participation in Class Discussion [20%]. Class discussion provides an opportunity for students to explore questions about the most fundamental aspects of our lives. Through shared inquiry, students gain experience in reading for meaning and communicating complex ideas; thinking reflectively about an interpretive problem; and supporting and testing thoughts through dialogue with peers. Class discussion fosters the flexibility of mind to consider problems from multiple perspectives and the ability to analyze ideas critically. Students should enter the discussions with specific questions generated by the texts as well as a desire to probe and reevaluate ideas. Note that, in order to be counted not only as present but more importantly as a participant, students must bring with them the text assigned for that day. Because most of the assigned works are available online, students can bring laptops to class. Hopefully it goes without saying that this freedom will not be abused.

2) Essays – Expository and Creative [4 x 15% = 60%]. Students will complete four major assignments in the course. These assignments will provide opportunities for students to explore ideas and use texts to add to the ongoing discourse. They will include:

a. Report on a Journey into the Unknown: You will take a journey of some sort into the unknown, whether that's an intellectual journey into a set of ideas or a literal journey to a previously unknown or unexperienced place. All safety precautions will be observed, as we will discuss in class on the first day. Your task will be to open yourself up to a new experience, to record your impressions and emotions, whatever they are, as you encounter something different. What mentalities helped you to not just endure but enjoy this experience? What mentalities prevented you from doing that and why? What mentalities might you need to further develop to better negotiate similar situations in the future?

b. Interview with an Entrepreneur: You will submit to your professors the questions you plan to ask your entrepreneur ahead of time, demonstrating your preparedness while understanding that the conversation you have will and should take unexpected turns. Your interview should be recorded, and your essay should consist of your write-up of the interview. A write-up is not just a transcription but an account, such as you would see in a magazine, of what was important and noteworthy about the interviewee's insights into the subject of entrepreneurship. What decisions did they make to get where they are? What values informed those decisions? What might they have done differently? What might they still hope to accomplish?

c. Blueprint for Something New: You will write up a plan for something you would like to invent or create, whether that be a new product, a new philosophy of life, a new society, a new creature, or anything you can envision and flesh out into a cohesive plan.

d. An Artistic Project: Students will compose and submit a creative work in a mode of their choice about some aspect of the unknown.

3) Final Examination [20%]. We will be meeting collectively in our classroom at the time designated in the University's final exam schedule for your final oral exam.

The grading scale for the course as a whole will be as follows:

A	93-100%	A-	90-92%		
B+	87-89%	B	83-86%	B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%	C	73-76%	C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%	D	63-66%	D-	60-62%
F	0-59%				

Attendance Policy

Because of the interactive nature of the class, attendance is an essential component. Excessive tardies constitute absences; three absences may result in failure (Undergraduate Catalog 20172018, "Academic Policies and Procedures"). Missed in-class work cannot be made up. (Please note that each meeting-hour missed represents one absence.)

Missed Exams or Deadlines

Only under extraordinary circumstances (i.e. severe medical emergencies) will you be allowed to make up an assignment. Otherwise, you will receive an automatic 0 for that part of the course. In case of pressing circumstances, it's imperative that you contact us beforehand so that we can make reasonable accommodations. If you find yourself struggling with an assignment, please meet with us before it's due so that we can troubleshoot the difficulties together.

Academic Integrity

It goes without saying that every student should be familiar with Chapman's academic integrity policy. You can find it [here](#). It also goes without saying that Academic Integrity will be taken extremely seriously in this course. That includes the use of AI. Details on the boundaries of appropriate use of AI will be given in class.

Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor/administrator and referral to the university Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions.

Academic Freedom

Speak your mind, even and especially if it's to share your confusion. Freedom of expression, especially in the academy, is one of the highest goods, if not the absolute highest. The objective of this class is not to get you to agree or disagree with anything the authors or we or your student colleagues think. It is for you to come to formulate ideas of your own as they emerge in dialogue with new readings and searching discussions with others. While you should support any claims you make with textual evidence and coherent argumentation, you might also find yourself expressing as many if not more questions than answers. Any discussion that takes place must be *respectful of others*. Students who do not engage respectfully will be asked to leave for the day.

Students will be introduced to a diversity of viewpoints, philosophies, methods, or other variables, as applicable, consistent with Chapman's Commitment to Free Speech and Academic Freedom. Students are encouraged and required to engage with each other appropriately and respectfully in exchanging and discussing ideas and viewpoints and otherwise learning and working together.

Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy

Students who seek an accommodation of a disability or medication condition to participate in the class must contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) and follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s) of any granted accommodations. This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or DS@chapman.edu if you have questions regarding this process, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive. <https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/disability-services/policy.aspx>

Chapman University's Anti-Discrimination Policy

Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity, including of backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in Chapman's [Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#). Please review the full description of the Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the Dean of Students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.

Student Support at Chapman University

Over the course of the semester, you may experience a range of challenges that interfere with your learning, such as problems with friend, family, and or significant other relationships; substance use; concerns about personal adequacy; feeling overwhelmed; or feeling sad or anxious without knowing why. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. You can learn more about the resources available through Chapman University's Student Psychological Counseling Services

here: <https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/psychological-counseling/>.

Fostering a community of care that supports the success of students is essential to the values of Chapman University. Occasionally, you may come across a student whose personal behavior concerns or worries you, either for the student's well-being or yours. In these instances, you are encouraged to contact the Chapman University Student Concern Intervention Team who can respond to these concerns and offer assistance: <https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/student-concern/index.aspx>. While it is preferred that you include your contact information so this team can follow up with you, you can submit a report anonymously. 24-hour emergency help is also available through Public Safety at 714-997-6763.

Religious Accommodation at Chapman University

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of all backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to fulfill their obligations to the university without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their sincerely held religious obligations. Please review the syllabus early in the semester and consult with your faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with major religious holidays, being as specific as possible regarding when those holidays are scheduled in advance and where those holidays constitute the fulfillment of your sincerely held religious beliefs. For more information, please see the [Fish Interfaith Center website](#).

READING SCHEDULE:

UNIT 1: The Certainties of the Known



WEEK ONE

T 2/3: Introduction.

R 2/5: Have read Jose Saramago, *The Tale of the Unknown Island*.

WEEK TWO

T 2/10: Have read Frank Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*, chapter 1.

R 2/12: Have read Plato, *Meno*.

WEEK THREE

T 2/17: Have read Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*, chapter 3

UNIT 2: Confronting the Unknown



R 2/19: Come to class having already watched, Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*
***Assignment Due: Journey into the Unknown.**

WEEK FOUR

T 2/24: Have read, Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*, chapter 7

R 2/26: Have read Lewis Carrol, *Alice in Wonderland*.

WEEK FIVE

T 3/3: Have read H.P. Lovecraft, "The Shadow over Innsmouth."

R 3/5: Have read Clemens, "Economics and Emigration"

WEEK SIX

T 3/10: Come to class having already watched Francis Ford Coppola, "Apocalypse Now."

R 3/12: Have read selections from Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*

WEEK SEVEN

T 3/17: Have read James Buchanan, "Natural and Artifactual Man" and
"Order is Defined in the Process of its Emergence."

R 3/19: Have read Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. (Pages tbd)

WEEK EIGHT – SPRING BREAK

WEEK NINE

T 3/31: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. (Pages TBD)

R 4/2: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. (Pages TBD)

***Assignment Due: Blueprint for Something New.**

WEEK TEN

UNIT 3: Becoming at Home with the Unknown



T 4/7: Have read passages on the Unknown in Various Traditions, and Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*, chapters 9 & 10

R 4/9: Have read Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*.

WEEK ELEVEN

T 4/14: Have read Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

R 4/16: Have read Darwynn Deyo, TBD

WEEK TWELVE

T 4/21: Have viewed before class, Peter Weir, *Walkabout*

R 4/23: Have viewed before class, Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man*

WEEK THIRTEEN

UNIT 4: Embracing the Unknown: Who Will You Be When You Get There?



T 4/28: Have read Roger Williams, *Key into the Language of America*.

R 4/30: Have read selections from Adam Thierer, *Permissionless Innovation*

WEEK FOURTEEN:

T 5/5: Have read selections from Magatte Wade, *The Heart of a Cheetah* and selections from Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (access on Canvas)

***Assignment Due: Interview an Entrepreneur.**

R 5/7: Have read Tauzin, “The Knightian Entrepreneur as Consensus Builder,” and Gillespie, “The Roaring Girl” (access on Canvas).

WEEK FIFTEEN – FINAL EXAM

