

Thematic Table of Contents for The New Humanities Reader

What should students entering college spend their time writing and thinking about? We think that the best way to get students to think seriously about writing is to give them serious problems to think about—problems that don't have easy answers, problems that can only be understood over time. There is no shortage of such problems in the world today and the breadth of the readings in the NHR makes putting together a thematically-based curriculum a relatively easy matter. Below, you'll find samples of thematically-based sequences that focus on what we believe to be the most pressing issues and problems of the day—the kinds of issues and problems that, in turn, provide students with the best opportunity to generate writing that really does matter.

Making Sense of Violence

How do we confront acts of violence that seem incomprehensible, unquantifiable, or endemic? Violence is such a significant part of human society, but it often defies easy explanation. In fact, it seems to be the quintessential, random element that thwarts the reasonable expectations we have for society, erupting explosively and unexpectedly. These authors attempt to approach or begin to make sense of a force that often seems insensible and insane.

Chua, Amy. "A World on the Edge." *Wilson Quarterly*.

Dillard, Annie. "The Wreck of Time: Taking Our Century's Measure." *Harper's*.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Power of Context: Bernie Goetz and the Rise and Fall of New York City Crime," *The Tipping Point*.

Kaldor, Mary. "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races, and Arms Control." Talk delivered at the Nobel Peace Prize Symposium, December, 2001.

Loffreda, Beth. Selections from *Losing Matt Shepherd: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder*.

O'Brien, Tim. "How to Tell a True War Story." *The Things They Carried*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

World Religion and World Secularity

The relationship between religious traditions and civil society has always been one of paramount importance for the world's peoples. Increasingly, cultures and religions from around the globe are coalescing and clashing simultaneously, with mixed results. These new combinations are often productive of new insights and new perspectives, some of which are explored by these authors.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Honor and Shame." *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*.

Armstrong, Karen. "Does God Have a Future?" *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.

Boyarin, Jonathan. "Waiting for a Jew: Marginal Redemption at the Eighth Street Shul." *Thinking in Jewish*.

Gould, Stephen Jay. "What does the dreaded 'E' word mean anyway? A Reverie for the Opening of the New Hayden Planetarium." *Natural History*.

Nafisi, Azar. Excerpt from *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Thurman, Robert. "Wisdom." *Infinite Life*.

Changing the World

The possibility of "changing the world" is at once a necessary ideal and an impossible ambition. The authors in this section are truly visionaries who, while recognizing the inherent difficulties their visions entail, think toward the furthest limits of human potential. Opportunities exist for genuine democracy, freedom, and social justice in

the world. These authors have begun making plans for taking advantage of those opportunities.

Chua, Amy. "A World on the Edge." *Wilson Quarterly*.

Greider, William. "Work Rules." *The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy*.

Guinier, Lani. "Second Prom and Second Primaries: The Limits of Majority Rule," *Boston Review*.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Women and Cultural Universals," *Sex and Social Justice*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.

Thurman, Robert. "Wisdom." *Infinite Life*.

Education: Learning, Conforming, and Knowing

As important as everyone seems to agree it is, we rarely think about the basis of education. How are we taught? How do we teach? And what is the goal of pedagogy? These authors consider the ways in which educational methods shape students and, ultimately, the world in which we live. They also explore the conflicts that arise within educational systems and within societies that seek to control them.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Honor and Shame." *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*.

Faludi, Susan. "The Naked Citadel." *The New Yorker*.

Nafisi, Azar. Excerpt from *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

Tannen, Deborah. "The Roots of Debate in Education and the Hope of Dialogue." *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*.

Thurman, Robert. "Wisdom." *Infinite Life*.

The Environment and Human Society

These authors consider the relationship between human nature and the natural world. This includes different ways we might understand the natural world, how we affect and interact with the environment, and what our own genetic dispositions have to teach us about ourselves.

Abram, David. "The Ecology of Magic." *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

Pollan, Michael. "Playing God in the Garden," *The New York Times Magazine*.

Schlosser, Eric. "Global Realization," *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.

Frans de Waal, Selections from *The Ape and the Sushi Master: Reflections of a Cultural Primatologist*.

Medicine and the Arts of Healing

What the authors in this section have in common is their interest in restoration: what the most sensitive and equitable way is to repair damage done to our minds, bodies, and environment. The arts of healing often raise social and political questions, as well, however, and these questions stimulate from these authors some of the most provocative responses.

Abram, David. "The Ecology of Magic." *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

Pollan, Michael. "Playing God in the Garden," *The New York Times Magazine*.

Relman, Arnold S. and Marcia Angell. "America's Other Drug Problem: How the Drug Industry Distorts Medicine and Politics." *The New Republic*.

Sacks, Oliver. "The Mind's Eye." *The New Yorker*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.
Stout, Martha. "When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It Was Friday." *The Myth of Sanity: Divided Consciousness and the Promise of Awareness*.

Gender and the Construction of Identity

Gender is often characterized as a social construction. Our expectations about how persons of particular genders should behave typically inform how we behave toward them and how we ourselves behave. These authors explore the process of constructing identity and some of its more devastating consequences.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Honor and Shame." *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*.

Faludi, Susan. "The Naked Citadel." *The New Yorker*.

Krakauer, Jon. Selections from *Into the Wild*.

Loffreda, Beth. Selections from *Losing Matt Shepherd: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder*.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Women and Cultural Universals," *Sex and Social Justice*.

Nafisi, Azar. Excerpt from *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Evolution and Understanding the Natural World

Evolution is still a hot issue with no signs of cooling down. The evolutionary topics these authors discuss range from our biological origins, how we are manipulating our genetic future, and the basis of evolutionary theory itself.

Abram, David. "The Ecology of Magic." *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

Gould, Stephen Jay. "What does the dreaded 'E' word mean anyway? A Reverie for the Opening of the New Hayden Planetarium." *Natural History*.

Pollan, Michael. "Playing God in the Garden," *The New York Times Magazine*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.

Frans de Waal, Selections from *The Ape and the Sushi Master: Reflections of a Cultural Primatologist*.

Art and the Making of Meaning

Academic scholarship is not the only way to produce knowledge. Personal experience and artistic, even irrational, speculations also play an important role in determining how we perceive the world. These authors, some of them creative writers themselves, explore the creation of meaning through art and experience in direct and indirect ways.

Dillard, Annie. "The Wreck of Time: Taking Our Century's Measure." *Harper's*.

O'Brien, Tim. "How to Tell a True War Story." *The Things They Carried*.

Pollan, Michael. "Playing God in the Garden," *The New York Times Magazine*.

Postrel, Virginia. "Surface and Substance." *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

Economics and Justice

The distribution of wealth is closely linked to the distribution of justice. Some of these authors explore the effects, frequently disastrous for rich and poor alike, of imbalances in those distributions. Others suggest ways of associating political freedom with economic freedom and discuss the benefits for the former of making the

latter more available. Whatever their principal area of concern, they all support the notion that freedom is the product of human will--as is economics.

Chua, Amy. "A World on the Edge." *Wilson Quarterly*.

Greider, William. "Work Rules." *The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy*.

Postrel, Virginia. "Surface and Substance." *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*.

Schlosser, Eric. "Global Realization," *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

Frans de Waal. Selections from *The Ape and the Sushi Master: Reflections of a Cultural Primatologist*.

Culture and Performance

To what extent is a lifestyle akin to a performance? Do we deliberately perform ourselves or are our performances the product of a larger social context? These authors offer different takes on these questions, demonstrating in what ways and in what ways we may not have control over our own cultural performances.

Abram, David. "The Ecology of Magic." *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

Faludi, Susan. "The Naked Citadel." *The New Yorker*.

Postrel, Virginia. "Surface and Substance." *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

Stout, Martha. "When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It Was Friday." *The Myth of Sanity: Divided Consciousness and the Promise of Awareness*.

Tannen, Deborah. "The Roots of Debate in Education and the Hope of Dialogue." *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*.

Globalization and Human Rights

Globalization seems to be the number one contemporary social issue. Proponents claim it will raise standards of living throughout the world. Detractors blame it for human rights abuses in developing nations. But what is it? What effects is it having, positive and negative? What effects is it having that are not so easily judged? Not all of these authors address globalization directly, but they all do address its consequences.

Chua, Amy. "A World on the Edge." *Wilson Quarterly*.

Kaldor, Mary. "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races, and Arms Control." Talk delivered at the Nobel Peace Prize Symposium, December, 2001.

Nafisi, Azar. Excerpt from *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Women and Cultural Universals," *Sex and Social Justice*.

Schlosser, Eric. "Global Realization," *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.

Scott, James C. "Behind the Official Story." *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Psychology, Subjectivity, and Personal Development

One of the hardest things to communicate, even to yourself, is your point of view. When we talk about the world or represent ourselves within it, we often try to do so in a way that others can understand. Sometimes we fail to get our point across. This can be deliberate. This can also result from hostility, mixed messages, or even mental illness. The goal then is to mend the breach in the most effective way possible. Part of that mending--a constant process--may also involve a degree of introspection. These authors have an interest in personal expression and,

for some of them, how it relates to interpersonal relations.

Gertner, Jon. "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness." *The New York Times Magazine*.

O'Brien, Tim. "How to Tell a True War Story." *The Things They Carried*.

Postrel, Virginia. "Surface and Substance." *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*.

Sacks, Oliver. "The Mind's Eye." *The New Yorker*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.

Stout, Martha. "When I Woke Up Tuesday Morning, It Was Friday." *The Myth of Sanity: Divided Consciousness and the Promise of Awareness*.

Tannen, Deborah. "The Roots of Debate in Education and the Hope of Dialogue." *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*.

Thurman, Robert. "Wisdom." *Infinite Life*.

Technology and its Future

One of the things we take for granted about technology is its unrelenting progress. But do we understand our relationship to the technologies we have created? These authors examine that relationship. The topics they consider include present technological solutions, future developments, and the nature of technology--and the consequences of relying on it--itself.

Johnson, Steven. "The Myth of the Ant Queen." *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software*.

Stille, Alexander. "The Ganges' Next Life." *The New Yorker*.

Stock, Gregory. "The Enhanced and the Unenhanced." *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*.

Tenner, Edward. "Another Look Back, and a Look Ahead." *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences*.