

SUMMER PRE-READING ASSIGNMENT

You will be reading **the novel *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn**. New York: Bantam Books, 1992. ISBN 0-553-37540-7. [Note: all other books for the course will be available from the MSU Bookstore. You should obtain this book on your own.]

Ishmael provides a model for the year's course, where you choose an issue and look at it from the perspectives of different disciplines in order to derive a more comprehensive interdisciplinary understanding.

The plot can be summarized in a few sentences: "Teacher seeks pupil. Must have an earnest desire to save the world. Apply in person." The teacher is a gorilla and the pupil, well that's what you'll learn. You should focus of what different disciplines are discussed and how they are integrated (synthesized, incorporated, interpenetrated) to provide greater insight by looking at the questions discussed from different perspectives than could be achieved by looking from the perspective of one discipline alone. You need to realize that an approach by any one discipline would only provide a partial understanding.

For our first class in September, you should bring a typewritten summary of *Ishmael*. Your summary will be collected and will count for 5% of your grade. Brevity is important. It is your ideas not the number of words that counts. This is not a plot summary. Rather, you should write chapter by chapter notes. While it is not essential that you label all of your notes, you should be looking for discussions dealing with:

- discipline = a branch of learning or area of study. One discipline is distinguished from other disciplines by its defining elements such as its unique combination of assumptions, concepts and theories. e.g. Anthropology, Political Science, Law.
- disciplinary perspective = the assembly of the defining elements of a discipline including assumptions, concepts, theories and methods. e.g. the legal perspective, the political perspective
- assumption = something taken for granted. A principle underlying a discipline and its overall perspective on reality. e.g. political science assumptions deal with the causes, prediction and explanations of political reality.
- concept = an idea generalized from particular circumstances that is the basic building block of a theory. e.g. oppression, globalization, immigration.
- theory = a generalized scholarly explanation about some aspect of the human or natural world supported by research. It how some aspect of the world works or why certain ideas or facts about the world are related; it may explain or predict behavior. **Theory vs. law:** a theory explains a phenomenon; a law simply states something with describing *why* it is true. A theory is like a law unless disproven.
- Insight= scholarly contribution to the understanding of a problem. It is the view or opinion of an expert on a particular problem.

[Definitions adapted from Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, 2008, pp. 335-353.]

Format for the *Ishmael* summary: You should use sentences and paragraphs, but NOT write an essay. You are looking for the disciplines, their perspectives, assumptions, insights, etc. *within* each chapter. You will be writing a paragraph summarizing your conclusions at the end. Your submission should be double-spaced. No consultation with any other student or source beyond the book itself is allowed. Do not worry if you are unfamiliar with terms like, concept, theory, etc. This is a learning process. You will be graded on how thoroughly you read and process the information.

BONUS [5%]: Draft a hypothesis consistent with *Ishmael's* plan for how to save the world.

RESEARCH ISSUE

You should bring a draft of your proposed research issue to the first class. Your issue should be expressed 3 ways as in the samples on the reverse side. You should e-mail me over the summer for assistance in formulating your research issue. Your issue **must** involve a **law-related** problem that requires at least one **other** discipline to arrive at a full understanding. You should use no more than 3 disciplines in your research. Most students use 2 disciplines.

The legal part of your topic should concern American law. You should also determine if you plan to focus on an issue of state or federal law. You will be asked to brief and include one legal case in your literature review for fall semester, so bear that in mind for the "law" side of your issue. You can have an international dimension to your issue, but it should be comparative to US law. Bear in mind that it is challenging to study the legal systems of another country

SELECTED SAMPLE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Research Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that the recognition of the right to physician-assisted suicide is a protection of individual civil liberties.

Discipline and Sub-Disciplines:

Law (Civil Liberties / Constitutional Law); Political Science (American Government)

Hypothesis as Question: Would the recognition of the right to physician-assisted suicide be a protection of individual civil liberties?

Paper Title: The Right to Physician-Assisted Suicide and Individual Civil Liberties—**Ali Abedin**

Research Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that the use of FDA-approved medical products for non- FDA -approved medical purposes presents a risk to public health.

Disciplines and Sub-Disciplines: Law; Philosophy(Ethics)

Hypothesis as Question: Are FDA-approved medical products for non-FDA-approved medical purposes presenting a risk to public health?

Paper Title: FDA-Approved Medical Products for Non-FDA-Approved Medical Purposes and the Risk to Public Health--**Fernando Fernandez**

Research Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that, subsequent to *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the United States Supreme Court has laid the foundation to uphold an individual's Second Amendment "right to bear arms" under state law.

Disciplines and Sub-Disciplines:

Law (Constitutional Law) ; Political Science (American Government, Political Theory)

Hypothesis as Question: According to *District of Columbia v. Heller* should states have the power to uphold and regulate individual "Right to Bear Arms"?

Paper Title: *District of Columbia v. Heller* and the 2nd Amendment "Right to Bear Arms"-- **Dorothy Kenney**

Research Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* influenced changes in the law of slavery in pre- and post- Civil War America.

Disciplines and Sub-Disciplines:

Law (Slave Law); Literature (Nineteenth-Century Novel)

Hypothesis as Question: Did Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* influence changes in the law of slavery in pre- and post- Civil War America?

Paper Title: Literary Confrontation: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a Challenge to Slavery—**Andrea Khan**

Research Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that, over the past two decades, Battered Woman Syndrome has become increasingly accepted as a justification for self-defense in homicide cases

Disciplines and Sub-Disciplines:

Law(Domestic Violence Law and Criminal Law) Psychology (Behavioral Psychology)

Hypothesis as Question: Should Battered Woman Syndrome become more accepted as a justification for self-defense in homicide cases?

Paper Title: Battered Woman Syndrome: A Defense of Justification-- **Laura Marchini**