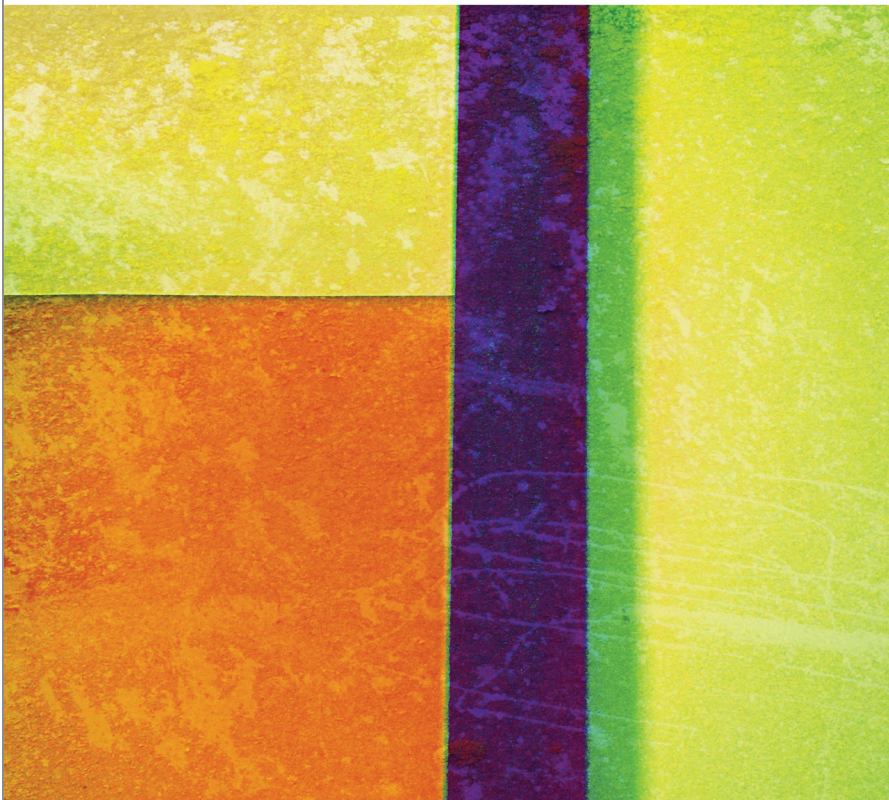


Studying the arts and humanities



Studying the arts and humanities



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This free course provides a sample of Level 1 study in Arts and Humanities

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Introduction

This course is an introduction to studying the arts and humanities. It takes you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and improve your confidence as an independent learner.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of Level 1 study in [Arts and Humanities](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand more clearly the reasons for studying the arts and humanities
- demonstrate an awareness of the basic skills and techniques for studying at a distance.

1 Studying the arts and humanities

1.1 Introducing the arts and humanities

This course is an introduction to studying the arts and humanities. It takes you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and improve your confidence as an independent learner.

So this introductory course will serve several purposes

- First of all, they will give you the experience of working through study material on your own.
- Secondly, this material will introduce you to, or renew your acquaintance with, the tools of study that you will need.

1.1.1 Distance-teaching technique

We also want to introduce you to the distance-teaching technique used in this course, which is to offer you a point at which to stop so that you can work out your response to a question, and then read our discussion. The stopping-point is signalled as an 'Exercise', followed by a pause, and then 'Discussion'. We hope that this system will give you the feel of a dialogue such as you would have in a tutorial, with tutor and other students. You will get the best results if you actively engage in the process: though it may seem tempting to read straight on to our discussion, you will be a more effective learner if you work out your response first, because you will then have something on which to measure our discussion.

We suggest also that at this point you equip yourself with a note book to use to complete exercises. Alternatively, you may wish to use the course Forum to record your responses. For the first dialogue, then, let me ask you a question ...

2 Reasons for choosing to study the arts

Exercise

Why have you chosen this course?

Please jot down your reasons for choosing this course, either in your notebook or in the course Forum. We suggest you list six points, but it doesn't matter if you record less than six reasons or whether you want to write more. Remember, there are no wrong or right answers here!

Discussion

It doesn't matter if you wrote down six reasons or whether you listed more, but we hope that you wrote something. This may seem a small point, but it is important. Learning on your own – without being able to question, or discuss, ideas with others – is a technique that has to be learned; and perhaps the first step towards this is to practise being active in the learning process. Distance-learning resources are normally written in ways to encourage you to develop as an independent, reflective learner. One of the ways in which this is done is by asking you, the learner, to note down your responses to questions posed in the text.

So, now let us return to your reasons for choosing this course. First, though, you may like to know of some of the reasons given by learners registered with the OU to study the arts and humanities:

I was good at English and history at school. I think I'll enjoy studying them further.

I never did all I could at school and I wasted my time. Now that I have a chance to do some study I want to take it.

I've spent some years doing a job which does not particularly interest me, and I need some kind of intellectual challenge. I want to meet other students, too.

I have always promised myself that I would find out what arts subjects are all about, and now I have the time.

How do these reasons compare with the ones you wrote down? If they make you want to add to your own list, please do so. We want you to end up with a list of no more than six reasons that begin to identify why you have chosen to study the arts. Once you have your list, please go on to the next exercise

3 Hopes and expectations about study

Exercise

Record your six reasons, but this time try to place your reasons in rank order, beginning with the reasons that seem most important to you.

Discussion

We hope that this process has made you think (though probably not for the first time) about why you are beginning to study the arts. You may already have realized that the process of writing down your reasons, though, takes your thinking a little further. And when you are asked to decide whether one reason is more important than another, you are beginning a process of identifying and ranking points. This is a process that you should find very useful when studying independently.

4 Concerns about study

Exercise

Let us continue this process of thinking, writing and sifting. As we have suggested, many students approaching study have worries about what lies ahead. Let's look at some worries that students have expressed to us. We will give you six statements; identify any that apply to you on a list, and add others you may have. Identifying these helps towards a constructive assessment of your own situation. Again, rank them in order:

I have not written an essay since I left school, and that was 20 years ago. Will I cope?

My work has got more demanding since I began studying. How shall I find the time to fit the study in?

I do not know anything about music or philosophy or classical studies. Will I be able to manage them?

If I'm honest, I have often taken things up and not finished them. Will this be different?

What shall I do if everyone knows more than I do?

I think my partner won't like me doing it.

Other feelings I have are...

With your rank order in your mind, write your responses to the statement below:

I feel anxious about studying the arts because...

Discussion

Again, we are not so interested in the number of anxieties: you may have only a couple, or you may wish you had space to write a dozen! It's more important that you identified them, and put them in the order that seems most important to you. Although these are personal reasons, the *process* you have gone through – of thinking, sifting and placing your points in order – is good practice. It is a vital preliminary stage in constructing an argument, which is an essential skill you should be developing as you progress your studies in the arts and humanities.

5 Studying the arts, expectations and concerns

Now we would like you to develop a little further the work you have done. You have captured some of your own ideas about approaching the arts. You have been 'trying to *trap* some of the ideas floating about in your mind'.

Exercise

We would like you now to write a paragraph of about 250 words on the reasons why you are taking up studying the arts, what you are looking forward to in future study itself, and what your concerns about it are. To do this, you will need to look back at the points we have worked through already. Your answer should aim to answer the following question

Will I be glad that I made the decision to study the arts, or will I regret it?

Since you have only 250 words to write, you will not be able to include all the points you have made, or all your positive or negative feelings. So you will need to prioritize your points, and discard those that are less important to you. It may be useful to start by making separate lists of points in favour of the decision (hopes) and points against (fears).

When you have completed your writing, you might like to reflect on the process you have gone through, and jot down in your notebook or the course Forum what you found easy, and what was more difficult for you. In this way you will begin to identify your own strengths and weaknesses.

Discussion

It is impossible for us to know what your reflections were, or what you have identified as your strengths and weaknesses. But we think that it is very important for you, as you begin studying the arts, to acquire the habit of reflecting on the learning you are undertaking. We are sure that future study will stimulate you, and that you will be introduced to, or renew acquaintance with, a wide range of topics. Thinking about these, as well as writing about them, will form a process for you which you will experience over the course of your studies. We think that you will be a better learner if, at the outset, you are able to reflect both on this learning process *and* on the knowledge that your studies will bring you.

To encourage this, we suggest that you keep a separate section in your notebook in which you can comment on the work you are doing - perhaps at the end of a section that you found particularly interesting or stimulating, or occasions where you found the work hard. Try to write a short comment to yourself on why this was so. This on-going diary of reflections will help you to identify your own learning style, and to build upon your strengths. You will benefit greatly from disciplining yourself to keep a reflective self-assessment of how you have developed in the course, both in terms of your study skills and in your own study patterns.

Conclusion

This free course provided an introduction to studying the arts and humanities. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

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