

Herbert H. Lehman College  
Fall 2022

Ralph William Boone  
Phone: 646-284-1446 (Home)  
Email: [ralphwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:ralphwilliams@gmail.com) (Personal)  
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. immediately after class; Appointment and ZOOM

Classroom: CA 324  
Office: CA 386  
Days: Tues. Thurs. 9:00 – 10:15 AM

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## WELCOME LETTER

### Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" v. Tyranny and Superstition

Dear Student,

Welcome!

All of the courses in the LEH 354 series underline and illuminate some part of history. In this class, we will examine the writings and philosophy of the most controversial and often willfully forgotten American Revolutionary Founding Father, Thomas Paine. "Common Sense" is a revolutionary pamphlet written by Thomas Paine.

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now."  
(*Common Sense*)

"These are the times that try men's souls." (*The Crisis #1*)

Thomas Paine

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Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* is the spark that lit the flame of the American Revolution. Paine is the first person to use the term, "The United States of America." No, less than Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams all considered Thomas Paine **the** Founding Father of the republic. Because of recent events in the U.S., this course will concentrate on the "tyranny" portion of the title and not the "superstition" part.

On January 6, 2021, democracy barely survived an existential challenge. Ordinary Americans were willing to overthrow the underpinnings of our democracy, and even kill some of its representatives. In a sense, it does not matter that they did it so much as the fact that they were inspired to attempt to do it.

This semester we will examine Thomas Paine's pamphlet<sup>1</sup>, "Common Sense," along with the biography of his life. Why? Because the American colonists **began** the American Revolution with the idea of "no taxation without representation." All they wanted was a representative or two from the colonies to be voting members of the British Parliament when deciding to raise taxes. The colonists did not want to be told by a government 3000 miles away what to do with their money. It was not until the publication of Paine's "*Common Sense*" months after the revolution started that the colonists began to think seriously about Paine's idea of **liberty** and that the colonists were perfectly capable of ruling themselves without any king or queen. At that time, only kings, queens, chieftains, tsars, sultans, and emirs, with few exceptions, ruled the world with the absolute power that they claimed God gave them.

In this time of turmoil, various interpretations, and misquotes of the United States' founding documents are happening now in 2022, It is wise to examine one of the major documents upon which historians claim Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence is drawn.

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Still, why study the writings of Thomas Paine? Does it bear any relationship to what is happening today in 2022?

In 2022 America, the basic idea of a democracy and what the USA stands for are being challenged. Is immigration good for America? How much power should the president have? Should the non-political agencies of government, such as the Attorney General's office in the Justice Department remain non-political or should they be the Chief Executive's law firm? Is America only for White Caucasians of European descent, no Africans, Muslims, Asians, or Latinxs allowed? Is the Media an enemy of democracy? Was the insurrection on January 6, 2021, justified? In these questioning times, it behooves Americans to return first to a reexamination of a founding document to rediscover what the Founding Fathers intended and to decide if we still agree with them.

The essence of Paine is that in America's darkest moments, he found the words to incite the people to action to fight for freedom from total British control and not just taxation. Thomas Paine is about ideas married to action. Great words alone achieve little. Action without ideas and a vision often leads to chaos. We study Thomas Paine to learn that any idea that we may have will come to naught if we do not risk-taking action. For example, if a person states that they believe in immigration, but does nothing to further immigration, nothing will happen. Sometimes the simple act of voting or not voting can change completely the direction of a country as it did on November 3, 2020.

The goal of this course is to define and understand the battle between Thomas Paine's reasoned common sense, and the tyranny of despotic governments.

Welcome to "Common Sense." I will be holding regular open office hours immediately following each Tuesday and Thursday lecture in Carman Hall, room 386. Please make certain I have your Lehman email address. I also invite you to schedule a private Zoom session with me.

Ralph William Boone

**WELCOME LETTER ENDS HERE – Syllabus STARTS HERE**

P.S. 1) I am certain we have students in this class on all sides of the issues and I welcome all kinds of comments and opinions. I ask that we all remain polite with each other and where possible supply proof supporting your position. It does not do anyone any good to simply state as fact that, "My grandmother heard it down in the garage while she was getting her brakes fixed from the woman sitting next to her, who heard it from a friend in the pet store." According to the courts, that is not evidence, but hearsay, and no name-calling, please.

All assignments are located under the "Discussion Board" tab.

Your first assignment is that you write a one and  $\frac{1}{2}$ -page response letter to me, reacting to what you have just read. Your second task is to respond to the 10-question syllabus quiz. Last, tell the class a little about yourself and your interests.

Please post all your responses on the "Discussion Board" by midnight, Thursday, September 1, by midnight. Simply completing the three assignments means everyone starts this class with an A!

**Required Texts** - *In reading the first text, many of you will discover that Paine has much in common with your families' experiences. Like you, he, immigrated to America, after living half of his life in England. Like some of you, Paine arrived in America broke and sick; and like you, he was determined to become a success. In just a few years, the whole world would know his name due to the publication of his "Common Sense."*

Lehman's library has an electronic eBook copy of the required text.

*Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations* by Craig Nelson. You can purchase a paperback edition for about \$4.00 with shipping on amazon.com, or you can purchase or rent a copy from the Lehman College Bookstore. In addition, two copies are on reserve in Lehman's library. A copy is also available on Blackboard under the "Course Documents" tab. I will supply hard copies of the additional materials under the "Course Documents" tab.

### **Office Hours**

I am here for your success. Office hours are immediately after class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Alternatively, you can arrange a private ZOOM meeting if it is more convenient for you. Call or text me at home: 646-284-1446, or email me at my email address: [ralphwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:ralphwilliams@gmail.com)

**Technology** - All class documents are available on Blackboard.

If you have, any questions about your Lehman email address or your password, or if you have any problems accessing the site please call the computer **helpdesk** at 718-960-1111.

### **Email Technology**

- All official notifications for this course are by email and through Blackboard. Once I have posted any course information via email or on Blackboard, students are responsible for the information.
- Your Lehman College email address is the **ONLY** email address I will use.

- Send emails addressed to the professor, professional in tone, grammatically correct, and containing a heading in the "Subject" line. No emoticons or Twitter abbreviations.
- The IT tech for this course is Stephen Castellano@ Lehman.cuny.edu

**Papers** - *These rules are a reminder for you of the importance of formatting*

- Submit all papers in MLA style. If a paper is not in standard MLA style, I will lower the paper's grade
- The rules for MLA style are under the "Course Materials" tab
- Make sure you proofread and spellcheck your papers
- All pages of the paper are to be numbered and stapled
- Grammar counts
- Make sure you proofread your papers

### Library Assistance



#### 24/7 Chat - New!

Chat with a librarian 24/7.  
Visit their live chat site

#### E-mail us

Use their email form to send a question. They generally respond to questions within 48 hours, when the library is open.



#### Call us

Call them during library hours at 718-960-8580.

### Grading

Papers are an opportunity to express your understanding.

Contemporary Paper 10%  
(You will examine a topic of your choice happening in America today.)

Declaration of Independence Paper 10%  
(In this paper, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the connection between *Common Sense* and the *Declaration*.)

Vocabulary and Expressions (V&Es) etc. 40%

(These will allow you to test yourself on your understanding of the text as we read it day after day in class.)

No Midterm; No Final exam

**Grammar and Style count and are included in your overall grade.**

**All papers must be in MLA style**

### Grading Scale

Grade	%	GPA
A+	(100+)	4.3
A	(95-100)	4.0
A-	(90-94)	3.7
B+	(87-89)	3.3
B	(83-86)	3.0
B-	(80-82)	2.7
C+	(77-79)	2.3
C	(73-76)	2.0
C-	(70-72)	1.7
D+	(67-69)	1.3
D	(65-66)	1.0
F	(0-64)	0.0
Inc.	Incomplete	
WU	Withdraw with Penalty	0.0
W	Withdraw, no penalty	
NC	No Credit	Must retake

Note: The syllabus is subject to change at any time.

### A little bit about me.

My major interests are Russian Language and Literature, Developing large Musicals, and Black Studies. I have advanced degrees in the first two, Russian and Theatre.

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This last section is a list of all the FREE services available to you at Lehman. Students nationwide are very concerned that there be both free mental health services and a food pantry on campus. Please note that Lehman has both a Free Counseling Center and a Free Food Pantry. Every person working at the college is here to help you achieve your goals.

### **Accommodating Disabilities**

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need any type of accommodation are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the **Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238**, phone number, **718-960-8441**.

### **Child Care**

There is a childcare center on campus available for students and the fees are reasonable. Lehman has Toddler, Pre-School, and After School Programs. If interested go to <http://www.lehman.edu/child-care-center/programs.php>

### **Veterans**

The **Office of Veterans and Military Affairs** is located in Shuster Hall in room SHU 201 A. If you are a veteran, please register with this office. They have scholarships, programs, and benefits just for vets! <http://www.lehman.edu/veterans-affairs/>

### **Counseling Center**

Students in colleges all over the country are demanding that more health services be available at their colleges. Fully licensed and/or degreed professional counselors staff Lehman's Counseling Center. The center is located on the first floor of the Old Gym (OG) building. Feel free to call or drop in. 718-960-8761 and your visit is 100% confidential.

### **Tutoring: Instructional Support Services**

The center is located on the second floor of the Old Gym building in Room 205. Their services are also available online. [Issp.program@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:Issp.program@lehman.cuny.edu)

### **Office of the VP for Student Affairs**

This office makes short-term loans and grants to students experiencing rent or other financial difficulties. [Conrad.walker@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:Conrad.walker@lehman.cuny.edu) 718-960-8242

### **Campus Life/Food Pantry**

This office assists students experiencing food insecurity and operates a food pantry. Please contact them at 715-960-8535. They are located on the lower level of the Student Life Building... [food.bank@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:food.bank@lehman.cuny.edu)

### **Academic Honesty Statement:**

"Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the accepted values of the College. **Cheating** is the unauthorized use or attempted use of material information, notes, study aids, devices, or communication during an academic exercise. **Plagiarism** is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research, or writings as your own." (Lehman College Undergraduate Bulletin 2009-2011, page 46.)