



Humanitas Teacher Training with Nate Antiel

Lecture 2: Back to the Sources: Introducing *Humanitas*

Outline:

Humanitas offers a revolutionary approach to learning by emphasizing primary sources, fostering a deeper connection with history, and engaging students in the great conversation of ideas. By prioritizing firsthand accounts and cultivating intellectual, moral, and aesthetic virtues, Humanitas transforms history education into a pursuit of what it means to be fully human.

Introduction: The Unique Approach of Humanitas

- **Problems with Conventional History Textbooks**
 - Reduce complex individuals and events to mere facts.
 - Emphasize rote memorization over meaningful engagement.
 - Fail to evoke personal connections with historical figures or ideas.
- **Humanitas' Goal**
 - Prioritize deeper engagement with the lives and thoughts of real historical figures.
 - Encourage students to cherish, empathize with, and learn from historical voices.

Primary Sources: The Heart of Humanitas

- **Definition and Importance**
 - Include firsthand accounts of historical events and ideas.
 - Represent what C.S. Lewis calls "old books" — works written by those who lived the history.
 - Provide unfiltered access to history and great ideas.
- **Comparison with Textbooks**
 - Most textbooks offer secondhand summaries and interpretations.



- Humanitas prioritizes substantial excerpts from primary texts with minimal interpretation.
- Examples: Plato's *Symposium* instead of summaries, Jefferson's writings instead of modern commentary.

Benefits of Engaging with Primary Sources

- **Authentic Historical Engagement**
 - Allow students to encounter both the "pastness" and the enduring relevance of the past.
 - Facilitate meaningful connections with historical figures and their questions.
- **Participation in the Great Conversation**
 - Explore enduring questions: justice, beauty, and the good life.
 - Join the pursuit of these ideas through direct dialogue with historical thinkers.
- **Modeling Virtue and Excellence**
 - Offer rhetorical, intellectual, and moral exemplars like Jefferson and Plato.
 - Help students cultivate intellectual and moral virtues.
- **Cognitive and Emotional Impact**
 - Expand students' consciousness, enabling them to see and think in new ways.
 - Encourage attention to universal themes like liberty, equality, truth, and beauty.

Pedagogical Approach: Humanitas' Design

- **Introduction and Notes**
 - Provide context and guidance to make primary texts accessible.
 - Address potential student challenges with annotated explanations.
- **Transformative Process**
 - Reading primary sources is an art that shapes the reader's mind and soul.
 - Students become artifacts of their own intellectual and moral growth.

