

Humanities: the underpinning of modern knowledge



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Humanities: The Underpinning of Modern Knowledge The usefulness of degree programs in the humanities has, of late, been the of much debate. Many people argue that education is too expensive and that the modern job market too specialized to waste time studying subjects of little practical value. Others argue that the humanities involve the most important of all possible subjects. It involves the study of philosophy and the human condition, for example, and these subjects teach us more important lessons and skills than subjects deemed more suitable for gainful employment. This essay will argue that, despite protests to the contrary, a Master of Arts in the Humanities remains both a useful and a valuable pursuit.

As an initial matter, the humanities is neither impractical nor irrelevant. Much, if not all, of our modern knowledge and technologies have their origins in the humanities. The scientific method and the rudimentary origins of geometry evolved from the humanities (Descartes, 1997). Our current knowledge of physics owes a great deal to the philosophical musings of Jonathon Locke (1689) and Sir Isaac Newton (1687). Those whom argue that the humanities, whether manifest in the form of philosophy, literature, or some or subject, are irrelevant to modern society are oblivious to the intellectual underpinnings of our modern knowledge. Sir Isaac Newton was as much a natural philosopher as he was a mathematician. To exclude all of Newton's philosophical writings would be to exclude much of the underpinnings of today's so-called advanced subjects. We know what we know today because of the humanities.

In addition to being practical and relevant, the humanities remain an exceptionally important and useful field of study. One need only look at current debates involving the biotechnology industry. Stem cell research, to <https://assignbuster.com/humanities-the-underpinning-of-modern-knowledge/>

use one well-known example, is entirely feasible from a scientific point of view. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of resistance to the use and the development of this technology. This resistance is based in the humanities rather than the hard sciences. The humanities inform us of important ethical and moral issues. The humanities caution us to be wary of the creation of new organisms and the manipulation of nature. Science offers no caution; quite the contrary, it is the field of humanities that causes the scientists and the businessmen to pause and consider whether they ought to be doing what they are planning to do.

Finally, the humanities has a great value to individuals and to society. The naysayers argue that we should engage in a very narrow-minded analysis. More specifically, they argue that salaries for graduates in the humanities are comparatively poor, and that there is no real market for the types of skills that the humanities offer. These arguments could not be further from the truth. The humanities, in the final analysis, teach how to think critically. The humanities teach how to identify issues and themes and trends. The humanities teach how to synthesize opposite points of view. These skills are very valuable. Businesses and organizations need people who are able to think critically. More, issues involving ethics and social responsibility are proliferating rather than contracting. It is almost impossible to do business with a corporation today which hasn't, in recent years, adopted a corporate code of ethics. The notion of a corporation as a socially responsible citizen is grounded in the humanities. What ought a corporation do or not do in certain circumstances? People with these skills, critical thinking and a background in ethics and logic, are better able to serve companies and other organizations.

In the final analysis, the argument that a Master of Arts in the Humanities is useless and without value is simply incorrect. It fails to account for the fact that most of our modern knowledge derives from the humanities and that the modern subjects are unable to address complex issues of ethics. The humanities remain a useful, viable, and valuable subject of discourse and study.

Works Cited

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